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WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

BY JOHN FULTON, D.D., LL.D.

NEW YORK:
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,
900 BROADWAY, COR. 20th STREET.

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ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY.

NEW YORK:

EDWARD O. JENKINS' SONS,
Printers and Stereotypers,
20 North William St., New York.

ROBERT RUTTER,
Binder,
116 and 118 East 14th Street.

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School of Religion

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON CHRISTIAN UNITY.

JOHN FULTON, D.D., LL.D.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON CHRISTIAN UNITY.

THE lectures on some of the Evidences of Christianity now presented to the public, were delivered in St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church, St. Louis, on the Sunday evenings of Lent, 1885, by ministers of the Presbyterian, Baptist, Congregational, Lutheran, and Methodist Episcopal Churches. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Robertson, Bishop of Missouri, with whose sanction the lectures had been arranged, was present, and presided on two occasions. On one occasion the venerable Dr. Bowman, Senior Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, presided. On every occasion the church was thronged by an immense congregation of eager listeners, and many hundreds were compelled to go away for lack of space to receive them.

I have been asked to prepare for this publication a statement of the considerations which led me at first to project the course of lectures which the approbation of my ecclesiastical superior, and the co-operation of my reverend and honored brethren above mentioned, have enabled me to realize. Without further preface I shall proceed at once to comply,

regretting only that the subject does not admit of greater brevity.

I.

I have for many years been mournfully impressed with the evils caused by the divided state of Christendom at large, and of late years more particularly with the disastrous consequences of the unnecessary divisions by which so many of the protestant churches are separated from each other. Not very long ago the mere mention of this subject would have sufficed to raise a storm of controversy over the question of "Who did sin?" in the origin of these divisions; and not a few earnest but inconsiderate souls would have been ready to maintain that divisions are of actual advantage to the cause of religion. Happily, most Christian people are now disposed to admit that, as in all family quarrels, so in every schism which has ever vexed the peace of Christ's Church, it is probable that both sides "have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." I count it a happiness to believe that the readers of these lines will, for the most part, agree in what I have to say against the plague of our divisions, and in favor of some effort to accomplish their removal.

1. The first remark which I submit is that all needless divisions of the followers of Christ are *unscriptural.* Causeless schism is forbidden in the Scriptures as a sin; no one will say that a divided array of wrangling

sects corresponds with St. Paul's conception of the Church as "one body in Christ"; and still less does it realize the vital and organic unity which our Lord desired for His followers when He prayed "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." Our divided Protestant Christendom does not present these attributes of vital and organic unity, and that it does not is due to our thoroughly unscriptural divisions.

2. It would be idle to shut our eyes to the *uncharitableness* out of which these divisions originally sprung, and to which they still tend. Their causes lay rather in temper than in necessity. None of us would to-day think it necessary or desirable to create these same divisions, if they did not already exist. In defending and promoting them there has been an expenditure of controversial energy which has usually been in inverse ratio to their utility. They have been, as St. Paul would have said, essentially carnal. Might he not say to us now, as he once said to the Church of Corinth, "Ye are carnal; for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?" If it were objected that divisions alone, without strife or envying, need not be carnal, the answer lies in the historical fact that every one of our divisions has actually sprung out of strife, and has actually led to envious contentions. If we have now come to a state of mind in which the

spirit of strife and envying is not, the best evidence of that better spirit will be some earnest effort to put away the uncharitable divisions which have been at once the fruit and the prolific seed of those sins.

3. The *wastefulness* of our denominational divisions ought alone to make us ashamed of them. I have seen a single village in which there were as many places of worship belonging to different denominations of Christians as there were hundreds of inhabitants. As one might suppose, the place of religion in that village was usurped by a disputatious and intolerant sectarianism; but if it had been otherwise, is it not pitiable to think of the waste of men, money, and energy spent by so many separate organizations, when one strong centre of religious life and culture must have been incomparably better? The instance I have named is by no means unique; there are hundreds like it in the West; and, to speak generally, but not, I think, extravagantly, I believe that for the interests of religion it would be well if one-half of the sincere and godly men who are now engaged in the maintenance and propagation of sectarianism could be withdrawn from a work in which they seem rather to be weakening each other's influence than promoting genuine religion. A united Church would know how to employ them all to some good purpose; but there is no united Church directing them; and schism is worse than wasteful; it is *wastefully destructive.*

4. It is in great cities, however, that the destructive results of our unhappy divisions appear without disguise in their most *unchristian* aspect. Take this city as an illustration. If we were organized as we might be, but as we can not be in our divided condition, I suppose that there are clergymen enough to minister to the entire population; and yet, simply for the lack of united organization, vast districts are left destitute of Christian care. One district alone, containing some 40,000 inhabitants, would, until recently, have been destitute of religious influence if it had not been for the Bethel mission. Now, happily, it has other missions; but "what are they among so many?" Here, as in New York and all other great cities on this continent, church after church has followed the movement of the wealthier people from whom their support is derived; and thus it comes to pass that the deserted districts are precisely those which ought to be best cared for, since they are the districts of the poor. If we were one body, as we ought to be, these districts need never be deserted. The city, as it grows, would be divided into parishes, each having its own church and its own minister, and the means of the whole body would easily and amply provide for every one of them, either from a common fund or by special endowment. It was in this way that the Christian Church at first secured its permanent position in every city and rural district of the

Roman empire; and it is in precisely this way that the Church of Rome is now endeavoring to lay the foundations of the supremacy in this country to which she aspires. While we, because of our divisions, are deserting the poor, she is taking hold of them by her schools, and preparing to retain her hold of them by establishing a universal parochial system. We may preach till doomsday, if the world will listen to us, against the errors of Rome; but while we preach, our divisions are simply delivering the country over into her hands. And must we not honestly confess that if we were to continue, for the sake of our pernicious divisions, to abandon the care of the poor, we should deserve neither honor nor success?

5. Unless I have greatly misunderstood one of our Saviour's most solemn utterances, I suspect that our divisions are worse than negatively unchristian; in their effects they are actively *anti-Christian*. What else can our Lord have meant when He prayed to the Father "that they all may be one, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me"? If these affecting words mean anything, is it not that, in some way or other, the unity of Christ's followers is a divine condition of the conversion of the world? If that is His meaning, is not every needless division treason to the kingdom of Christ? And, to speak very practically, what can it be but treason to permit the helplessness caused by our divisions to hand over to perdition, so

far as we are concerned, perhaps more souls than our divided ministry is saving? With what consistency are we spending millions of money in foreign missions, while the wasteful wantonness of our denominational divisions, together with the crippled inefficiency which is caused by them, is virtually and needlessly consigning more thousands of our own countrymen to heathenism in one year than all our missionaries put together have ever converted in five? God forbid that I should disparage any effort to spread His Gospel at home or abroad; but while we are rejoicing over the heathen whom we save, let us not forget the account we have to give of the heathen our divisions are making by the thousand in every great city of this land.

II.

1. It is our happiness to know that the divisions which I have described as unscriptural, uncharitable, wasteful, unchristian, and, in a fearfully true sense, anti-Christian, are not of our making. In this, at least, "the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." We have inherited our divisions; we have not made them; and we are responsible for them only so far as our temper tends to perpetuate them.

2. At the same time it will not do for ministers to forget that it is ministers who have created all the divisions which exist; that it is ministers who have

kept them alive, and that ministers, if they genuinely wished it, might bring them to an end. As a matter of fact, a great majority of our people care nothing about them; not a few would, even now, be glad to be rid of them; and if ministers in general were as large-minded as their people, less than a generation hence the world would see a different state of things. Our people are both wearied and ashamed of sectarianism. They resent the name and despise the thing. There are few who would not be shocked at the facts to which I have referred, and hardly any who would not be willing to make personal or denominational sacrifices to remove the cause of them. Unhappily there are not many to whom this matter has been presented in a practical way. It is strange when one remembers the clear language of Scripture, and stranger still when one thinks of the fearful testimony of experience, and yet I suspect it to be true that most Christian people in the United States would be startled if they were to be told, as they ought to be, that our divisions are essentially evil; that they ought to be removed; that until they are removed the conversion of the world can never be achieved; that in the meantime they are apparently consigning to heathenism more souls than the missions of all our churches are converting, and that in this country, while we are dallying with duty and wrangling about trifles, the Church of Rome is laying the foundations

of future control by the use of a system which we might apply as well as she, if we were, as we ought to be, one body with each other.

3. Thus far I may perhaps allow myself to believe that most of my readers will agree with what I have said, but I could not hope that they would agree with me if I were to attempt to propound a programme of reunion. I have no such purpose. I am frank to say that I do not look for any rapid change in the existing condition of things. The chronic plague of generations is not to be healed at once, however much we may deplore it; and, indeed, it never can be until the Son of Man, seeing that we have faith to be healed, shall say to His repentant Church, "Thy sins be forgiven thee; go and sin no more!"

4. And yet it would be a step (would it not?) toward the healing touch of our Master, if all Christian people could be brought to realize the disastrous consequences of division, and heartily to pray that in God's good time and in His own good way He will heal the plague of the daughter of Zion, so that we may all be one. If the spirit of unity shall be given us, as it will be given if we faithfully ask it, the root of all divisions will be already gone, and many a thing which we could never yield to the dictation of our equals, nor concede to the force of their arguments, we may yet find it easy to do, or to leave undone, out of pure love to the brethren.

In the meantime it seems to me that there are two dangers against which we must be specially on our guard.

5. The first of these is the inconsiderate assumption of an essential and sufficient unity as already existing among us in spite of our notorious divisions. This I hold to be an unfortunate delusion, which hinders the reality of unity by a radical misconception of its nature. A unity of mere sentiment does not seem to me to realize the vital and corporate unity for which Christ prayed; and to assume that it does is to cry, Peace! Peace! when there is only a cessation of strife. The unity which breaks to pieces at the Lord's Table is not the unity of "one body in Christ," and to imagine it to be so is to assume that a general but indefinite good-will dispenses with the necessity of the unity which Christ commanded and which Paul described. The unity which has brought upon us the disastrous state of things to which I have referred, is a fatal unity indeed, and to be content with it is to forget that "the unity of the spirit" implies some apostolic "bond of peace," by means of which the zeal and energy of the whole Christian Commonwealth can be consolidated and applied to the conversion of the world. No! Painful though it is, and ought to be, to recognize our lack of unity, it is better and braver and manlier to face the mournful fact, and then to pray that we may be delivered

from it, than to rest satisfied with sentimental fictions. To assume that we are already one, in the sense in which we ought to be one, is to cease to seek the unity which alone can make us one in deed and in truth. Until we can attain to that, it is better to recognize our divisions, and to respect each other in them, and to love each other in spite of all of them, than to shut our eyes to the notorious fact of their existence, or to the sin and shame and waste which they have caused.

6. But, on the other hand, if truth requires that we shall recognize our differences with fidelity, surely truth and charity alike require us to remember the incomparably greater things in which we are at one, and in view of which we ought to blush for our divisions. To condemn our present separation from each other, I think it would suffice to say that the seven writers of this book, belonging, though they do, to seven separated denominations of Christians, can to-day with one mouth confess the faith of Christ in the very words in which that faith was set forth by the Church of Christ when Christendom was one;* that

* So far as the writers of this book are concerned, it may be well to say for each and all, and to say with all possible emphasis, that we neither seek nor desire any fallacious unity to be purchased at the cost of virtual apostasy. We pray for the unity of Christ's Church with all our hearts. We would gladly devote our lives to its attainment. In order to its consummation, there are many things which we would be ready

we hold and teach one and the same code of morals; and that we find God's Holy Word in the same Books of the Sacred Scriptures. These are weighty facts which it helps the cause of unity to bear in mind, because, when we think of them, we are constrained to ask: Why, then, are we separated from each other?

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to consider, or to reconsider, in a spirit of candor and meekness. But there are some things which we could never consent to admit as topics of discussion, and concerning which we could admit no compromise. The elementary truths which are common to all Christendom, and which are simply and summarily expressed in the Apostles' Creed, are not, in our judgment, open to debate. Furthermore, while we would not impose on the unlearned or the feeble any larger or more elaborate scheme of dogma than that which is contained in that Creed, we could never consent to an ecclesiastical unity which did not accept it in the sense in which it is more fully expressed by the Creed commonly called the Nicene. On that basis, but on that alone, we should be at one, not only with the Church of the present, but also with the Church of the past, when there was indeed but "one Body and one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism." We pretend to judge no man; and in certain movements, looking toward a better understanding among Christian people, there is much which commands our deepest sympathy; but, so far as any of them intimates or implies a disposition to admit to question, or in any way to tamper with the broad foundations of the Faith of Christ's Church Catholic, we desire to be understood as rejecting from the first all thought of compromise concerning such things. The title of this little book has been chosen advisedly. It is intended to give some of the arguments for the Catholic Faith; and by the Catholic Faith we understand the Apostles' Creed as explained and expanded in the Creed of Nicæa, Constantinople, and Chalcedon.

III.

1. I have come to believe, firmly and almost passionately, that Christian people of every name will shortly be led by the grace of God to desire a restoration of the Church's broken unity, and that the occasion of its beginning will be the appearance of some common danger, or the recognition of some common duty.

2. In many ways an impatience of denominational sectarianism has begun to be exhibited; in the most unexpected quarters the desire for unity has begun to be expressed; and I believe that impatience of the one and a desire for the other have been quickened by the presence of the common danger, and by a recognition of the common duty which confront us in the general advance of a shallow but thoroughly destructive infidelity, side by side with a scientific materialism and a philosophical agnosticism to which the adjective *shallow* can by no means be applied. In the presence of these enemies of all religion and of all morality, sectarianism sinks into deserved contempt. For the moment, at least, our differences are forgotten, and we think of each other only as Christians and as brethren.

3. This effect of our perplexities is altogether wholesome, because it compels us to appreciate the immense value of our agreements; and by God's grace

it may induce in us a temper and disposition which will enable us by and by to consider and discuss our differences also with a view to their removal. To seize the present opportunity and turn it to advantage seems to me to be the duty of the hour; and how can Christian men better or more sincerely turn such an opportunity to good account than by gathering our common strength in the defence of Him whom we confess to be our common Lord? There are many doubtful souls hesitating and questioning whether they shall believe in Jesus as the Son of God. For men of different communions, whose fidelity to their respective ecclesiastical obligations is beyond dispute, whose mutual respect is too great to admit the suggestion of unworthy compromise, but who, in the faithful performance of their several duties, are able to send out anxious sympathies over the whole kingdom of Christ—for such men to stand together, telling the perplexed in mind why they believe in Christ as Lord and God must surely be a good thing in itself; and while it must strikingly emphasize our agreement in the greatest of all verities, it must also be a still more striking rebuke of our too real but unnecessary divisions.

It was these considerations, and other the like, which led me to form the plan of a course of lectures in defence of the Christian religion, to be delivered in

St. George's Church, by representatives of different bodies of Christians in this city. At the very outset I had to consider whether any obligations of ecclesiastical order ought to deter me from giving, or my brethren from accepting, the invitation which I desired to extend to them.

That serious questions touching Church order and the ministerial commission exist is a fact which we may not ignore. They relate to a subject no less important than the will of our Lord concerning the permanent constitution of His Church; therefore we have no right to ignore them. That the unity of Christendom can ever be accomplished without a settlement of them ought not to be expected. The greatest and some of the earliest divisions of Christendom were occasioned by questions of jurisdiction, and it is probable that questions of a like sort will be the last to be settled before catholic unity can be restored.

But they can not be settled now, and there is no good reason why they should be opened on the very threshold of an effort to promote the spirit of unity. In all such preliminary approaches we must be content to recognize each other, and to be recognized by each other, simply as Christian men and as baptized members of the one Body of Christ. In that capacity it never can be wrong to join our forces in defending the claims of our Lord and Master against any adversaries. To maintain His cause is no exclu-

sive part of any ministerial prerogative. In the whole world there is not one single Church which denies the right of any Christian, whether minister or layman, to defend the name and cause of Jesus Christ, in public or private, against the assaults of enemies.

I have said before that it is ministers who have been the unhappy originators of nearly or quite every schism which has vexed the peace of Christ's Church; and yet nothing seems to be more clear than that it is by ministers alone that our existing schisms can be removed. They will begin to do that good work, I believe, when they shall be found ready to approach each other for Christ's sake, and in the love of Christ's people, to consider the things that make for peace; postponing for the moment all questions of precedence and authority, and meeting on the common platform of brethren in Christ.

With this thought I approached my reverend brethren, the honored pastors of six of the largest congregations in this city, and invited them to deliver the series of lectures which I proposed.

The invitation was accepted with a generous readiness which was as honorable to them as it was gratifying to me. I would gladly give expression to my appreciation of their Christian nobleness, but I forbear.

The lectures themselves are now, in compliance with a very general desire, submitted to the public.

It would not become me either to criticise them or to praise them; but I may not improperly take leave to say that the effect of what these reverend gentlemen did was fully equal to the effect of what they said. For many weeks thousands of Christian people in this city had their minds drawn to the consideration of unity as a necessary note of Christ's Church; and however differently they may have thought about it, certain it is that all were led to hope for some more worthy exhibition of unity in Christ than the world now has. Naturally, too, the temper of Christian brotherliness was increased, and the tone of Christian faith among our people was notably invigorated.

Thus our feeble effort to promote "the spirit of truth, unity, and concord" among the followers of Christ was manifestly blessed of God, and with all our hearts we bless God that it has been so. May the publication of this book be likewise blessed to the advancement of His glory, by the maintenance of truth and by the promotion of unity among His children.

JOHN FULTON.

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH,
Easter-Tide, 1885.

I.

THE APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY.

S. J. NICCOLLS, D.D.

"*It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.*"—LUKE i. 3, 4.

"*But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through His name.*"—JOHN xx. 31.

I.

THE APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY.

No argument is needed to prove that a religion called Christianity now exists in the world, and has existed for eighteen centuries. That its adherents have often been sadly at variance among themselves; that it has at times been corrupted by superstition, and perverted by the ignorance or unholy passions of men; and that it has been manifested in forms more or less divergent from the original type, are facts which, however much they may be deplored, can not be denied.

But it still remains true that such a religion, with its peculiar, distinctive, and essential doctrines, exists; and that its origin is traceable directly, and without any reasonable doubt, to the appearance in history of a person named Jesus Christ. It is on Him that Christianity is founded; He is the Rock upon which the Church is built; to Him all Christians look for salvation and eternal life, and to His authority and guidance as supreme and infallible, they submit themselves.

This religion, from the very first until now, has made the highest possible claims for its origin and authority. It asserts with a positiveness which admits of no misconception, not only that it is from God, but that it is the only religion that has come to man with the divine sanction, and that as the true religion, it has existed from the beginning of human history.

It claims to teach the only true way of salvation, and that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Its adherents, while they are ready to admit that there are great truths taught in other religions, and that they may have served important ends in history, claim for Christianity that it stands alone, unique, and sovereign, like its divine founder—the one religion given by God to men, in which is revealed what we are to believe and do, in order to be accepted of Him.

It is very evident, in view of these high claims, that one of the most important questions that can be asked concerning Christianity is: "Does it come to us properly authenticated as of God?" "Is it of supernatural or divine origin?" The facts and arguments which lead to a moral certainty that our holy faith is indeed of God, are known in general as the evidences of Christianity.

These evidences are neither few nor uncertain. Their complete statement would fill volumes. They

are to be gathered in abundance, from Scripture and from history, from miracles and prophecy and Christian experience. They are cumulative; instead of diminishing they increase as time goes by. They are so interlaced and locked together, that they mutually support and confirm each other, and unitedly form a body of testimony, such as can be gathered for no other fact in human history.

And now, that it is proposed to speak from this pulpit on some of these evidences, it must not be supposed that we, as Christian ministers, do it as though we were defending some old and crumbling citadel, which needs to have its decrepit walls buttressed anew. On the contrary, so confident are we of the stability of our holy faith, that we are sure that the very "gates of hell shall not prevail against it"; and we challenge the fullest investigation of the evidences that sustain its claims. Our chief desire is, in humble imitation of the Evangelists themselves, to present to you some things from which you may know the certainty of the Gospel of Christ; and furthermore, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through His name."

From these evidences I have selected for our consideration, that which is known as the apostolic testimony, or in other words, that which is recorded in the New Testament. That the testimony of the apos-

tles included some things which are not recorded in the Gospels or Epistles, can easily be inferred from the words of St. John (xxi. 25). But the Church in all ages has claimed that the genuine apostolic statement of her faith concerning Jesus Christ, was contained in the books of the New Testament. That which the apostles taught and testified concerning Him, is accurately and sufficiently recorded in them. Here, then, we have certain books presented as testimony concerning the origin of Christianity, which purport to have been written in the very age in which Christ lived.

The first question which naturally presents itself with reference to them is: "Are they genuine?" That is, were they written as they claim to be, by the apostles, or their companions? These books exist, and the question we are now to consider is, not whether they are inspired or infallible, but simply this: "Are they genuine documents from the apostolic times?" The proof that they are, is so abundant that it can be stated now, only in outline.

As to the antiquity of these books, there never has been any question. It is admitted on all sides, that they were in existence during the middle and latter part of the second century, that is, at a time not as far removed from the days in which the apostles lived, as we are from the time of the American Revolution. The incontestable proof of this is, that many

writers of that period—over thirty in number—in various ways refer to these books, or quote from them. They were not only appealed to and quoted by Christian writers, but also by heretics and the heathen opponents of Christianity. At that time, also, they were regarded as of the highest authority with reference to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, who was born not more than twenty years after the death of the Apostle John, and who wrote during the latter part of the second century, writes thus: "There is such assurance concerning the Gospels, that the heretics themselves bear testimony to them, and every one of them endeavors to prove his doctrine from them."

This statement has special significance when we recall the fact, that as early as the middle of the second century, these books were used to check and condemn growing errors and heresies in the Church. But while the heretics in their own interests, sought to corrupt the Gospels, or give them false interpretations, and even forged books in the name of the apostles, they never disputed their genuineness. It would have been an immense gain to their position to have done so, but that they did not, shows conclusively that they had no warrant to question it.

Surely, it is in the range of the most ordinary understanding to see, that it would have been a moral

impossibility to have secured at that time, for certain new-made books forged in the name of the apostles, immediate and universal recognition as of supreme authority, not only from the Church, but also from errorists and heretics, when it was to the interests of the latter to reject them. The only fair, rational conclusion is, that they had come down to them from a former period. And this is supported by further incontestable testimony. Clement, Mathetes, Ignatius, Polycarp, the author of the epistle of Barnabas, Papias, and Justin Martyr, were Christian fathers who lived and wrote between the years 30–165. Some of them were companions and colaborers with the apostles. One of them, Justin Martyr, who died A.D. 165, was a voluminous writer in defence of the Christian faith. All these in various ways, give their testimony to the existence of some of the Gospels or Epistles, principally by quoting from them.

Thus, as distinctly as we can trace the current of the Mississippi from its outflow into the Gulf, back to its source among the mountains and lakes of the North, so can we trace these documents, which have come down to us with their wealth of blessing, back to apostolic times. Indeed, among all the mass of evidence presented by the writings of believers, heretics, and heathen opposers, from the days of the apostles to the fourth century, there is not a single doubt expressed as to the apostolic origin of our

Gospels, though a few errorists denied in part the authority of one of them. All this testimony agrees precisely, with what we find in the documents themselves. In a most striking manner, they furnish the evidence of their own origin.

The writers in most cases give their names, or assert that they gave their accounts as related by eye-witnesses. Why should we not believe them in this? We do so in other cases without doubt. We do not hesitate to believe that Herodotus wrote his history, and Xenophon the Anabasis, Josephus his history of the Jews, or Horace the odes ascribed to him, yet the evidence that John wrote the fourth Gospel, and Paul the Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians, and Matthew his Gospel, is tenfold stronger.

The account which these books give of their origin is certainly credible. Jesus Christ Himself wrote no books. He was the great Subject, not the Author, of Holy Scripture. The Scriptures, Old and New, were made to testify of Him. His disciples, taught orally by Him, were called primarily, not to write books, but to preach in His name; that is, to bear witness for Him by word of mouth. But as the Church grew, and imperfectly instructed men began to teach, and misconceptions and errors multiplied, there arose the necessity that the apostolic testimony should be placed in some permanent, written form.

It was to meet this necessity that these books were

written. They all bear certain marks of that age, not only in the language in which they were written, but also in their constant, natural, and accurate allusions to places, names, events, and conditions of society. Take Paul's letters to the Galatian churches, troubled with Judaizing teachers, or to the Corinthians, just emerging from heathenism, or the book of Acts as a journey of travel, with its life-like pictures—and he who examines them carefully will not shrink from the conclusion, that it would have been a literary impossibility to have written these books after the events of which they speak had long passed away. Their forgery under such circumstances, would have been more wonderful than anything contained in them.

Such testimony as this ought to be conclusive as to the genuineness of these books, unless it can be set aside by new facts. We believe on the testimony of those who preceded us, that a certain document, called the "Farewell Address," was written by Washington. This has been the accepted and unquestioned belief of the period between his day and our own. Nor can it be questioned that the men of that period are as competent witnesses in this matter, as any who may come after them. Suppose, however, that some critic or unbeliever in the address should arise among us, and show by cunning and plausible argument, drawn from the structure of the address alone, that it could not have been written until at least fifty

years after the death of Washington; and that its existence was to be accounted for by the growing attachment of the people for Washington; and that they had gradually brought themselves to believe that this was the way in which the Father of his country addressed his fellow-citizens—could this conclusion be accepted in the face of the facts that men of Washington's day have declared that they had read that address, and have quoted from it, and their quotations correspond with what we now find in it?

The only thing that could justify the overthrow of the common belief, would be the presentation of some new historical facts, which would show conclusively that Washington was not the author of the Farewell Address. Facts can not be set aside by arguments, inferences, or theories, however plausible. Such, and even stronger, is the case with reference to these apostolic documents.

All who have written with reference to them, both friend and foe, in the times immediately succeeding the apostles, attribute with perfect unanimity their authorship to the apostles. Such was the universal belief of the Church at that time. This belief can be set aside only through the production of some new facts to the contrary; and not a solitary one has been produced, though the history of those early days has been searched as with a microscope.

It has been reserved for modern times to set up

the preposterous claim that these books are a cunning forgery, a notion so absurd that it has long since been abandoned in all intelligent quarters of infidelity. This notion survives only among the ignorant, the misinformed, and those who through bitter hatred and prejudice are incapable of reaching a rational conclusion in this matter. Infidel scholarship has long ago renounced it for the more plausible, mythical theory.

Men like Baur, of Tübingen, the giant leader of the Rationalistic school, claimed that the Gospels were a collection of myths and legends, which in course of time gathered around the story of Jesus Christ, and were put in form during the second or third century. It was only another case of theory against facts. It was against the positive statement of the books themselves, against the testimony of the early Church, and against the intelligent, moral convictions of men. Legend, myth, and idle story building up a religion that has revolutionized the world, and changed the hearts and lives of millions from sin to righteousness! Legend, myth, and idle story gradually forming that marvellous presentation of the Christ, in which the enlightened centuries have found their highest and holiest conceptions of God, and duty and character! No wonder that the theory soon broke down, and its own defenders were compelled to modify it.

Let us now go a step farther. These books exist,

and we have seen that in all probability they belong to the apostolic age. At least we are justified in receiving them as testimony from that age, to the origin of Christianity. Such as it is, it is here for our examination. Nor can there be any doubt as to its purport. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." What, then, is the nature of this testimony, and what is it worth?

1. We read these books and, first of all, we are impressed with the fact that the writers are sincere. Evidently they speak with the accent of conviction. Take, for example, the writings of Paul. No one in ancient or modern times, has ever doubted the authenticity of at least four of his Epistles. Baur, the famous leader of the Rationalistic school, says, with reference to the Epistle to the Galatians, the two Epistles to the Corinthians, and the Epistle to the Romans: "There never has been the slightest suspicion of authenticity cast on these four Epistles. On the contrary, they bear in themselves so incontestably the character of Pauline originality, that it is not possible for critical doubt to be exercised upon them with any show of reason." Renan pronounces these Epistles "unquestionable and unquestioned" as to their genuineness.

Paul, in these letters, testifies to the main and essential facts of the Gospel; that the Eternal Son

of God was manifested in the flesh, took to Himself a true human nature, lived among men, was crucified, and died for the sins of men on the cross, rose again from the dead, was seen by His disciples after His resurrection, and by five hundred of them at one time, and afterward ascended to heaven to reign as Lord over all, and the only Saviour of men. In this he agrees with all the testimony of all the apostles. Undoubtedly, Paul was sincere in what he taught. When he says, "now the things which I write unto you, behold before God I lie not,"—we can not think that he is deliberately perjuring himself.

He uttered his testimony in spite of loss, persecution, and reproach; he sealed it by a martyr's death. We can not imagine why he, or any of those witnesses, should have said what they did, unless they believed it to be true. If those men were not sincere, then we can not believe any man to be sincere. Hypocrisy and deceit are the only realities. Nor, again, can we believe that they are dupes, or fanatics inspired by delusions. They do not speak or act like it. Could delusions and frauds earnestly believed, have made them what they are, the noblest characters and our foremost teachers of the truth among men? When Paul declared in manifest sincerity, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me," are we to understand that a delusion honestly believed,

was the secret of that marvellous life of his? Unquestionably it was the sincerity of the apostles that led them to proclaim their Gospel to others, and so multitudes believed. Must we, then, conclude that Christianity itself, the grandest movement in history, has for its origin and inspiration nothing more substantial than a delusion firmly believed? This is asking us to receive as true, what our moral sense as well as experience contradicts, that a lie, held in sincerity, has done more to bless the world, and has produced nobler and holier men and women, than the truth!

On the supposition that all which the apostles wrote and testified is true, we can easily account for what we see in their lives, and in the triumphs of the Church; but on no other ground. The only key that fits the lock must be the true one.

2. There is a second feature in this testimony, that arrests our attention. It is the unquestioned, unrivalled superiority of the moral teaching of these books. There is nothing like it to be found in the whole range of human literature. It is as far above that which is taught in the sacred books of other religions, in clearness and range, as sunlight is to candle light. To all the ethical teachings of the New Testament we must respond in our deepest hearts, as did a certain scribe to Jesus: "Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth." We know what the Rabbins,

students of the ancient Scriptures, have written; and what the loftiest intellects of the race, such as Plato, and Seneca, and Confucius, and Marcus Aurelius have taught in morals. How does it come that these plain, humble men from despised Galilee have taught a morality that stands absolutely peerless in its perfection? It is simply impossible to account for this immense difference on natural grounds.

3. Another, and the crowning feature of this testimony, is the statement it makes concerning Jesus Christ. There rises up from the pages of the Gospels a face of such matchless beauty, that no artist has ever been able to paint it true to life. There is presented in them the picture of a Person living among men, tenderly and perfectly human, yet manifesting such glorious and divine qualities, that He has never ceased to draw increasing millions in adoring homage to Himself. And this presentation is no ideal conception; no cunning work of the imagination of the writers. That four different works of pure fiction, each by a different writer, and each marked by the personality of its author, shall agree in presenting one sinless, original, perfect character, moving in life-like and natural action in human affairs for thirty years, and in the most difficult circumstances, is not to be thought of. The mightiest geniuses since then, with this wonderful original before them, have not been able to invent a like

perfect character. This stands alone, unique, without a parallel among men. It is so original and distinct and life-like, that it has impressed even the most sceptical as a reality. You will not accuse me of taking a partial witness on this point in John Stuart Mill.

He says: "Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left, a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers, even those who had the direct benefit of his personal teaching. It is of no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospel, is not historical, and that we do not know how much of what is admirable had been superadded by the tradition of his followers. . . . . Who among his followers or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived, as they always professed that it was derived, from the higher source."

It would be easy to gather abundance of testimony like to this, not simply from the believing and adoring Church, but also from the recognized leaders of scepticism through the centuries. But it can be

asserted, without fear of contradiction, that the matchless and sinless personality of Jesus Christ is a historic reality. There He stands, dividing the ages with His glorious appearing among men. He is lifted up before us in these Gospels, challenging the attention of all by His claims. He is a fact, and how shall we account for it? Is He simply the product of corrupt, erring, weak humanity, or has He come, as He said, from the very bosom of the Eternal Father? Can an unclean thing bring forth the clean; a bitter fountain send forth sweet waters; our sinful humanity beget the Christ?

4. Another feature in these books is the striking difference, observable to every one who makes the examination, between them and all other written accounts of Jesus Christ. They stand alone, and can no more be classified with others, than diamonds with common stones. There are still extant, books from the first and second and third centuries, written by Christians, and professing to give an account of the life and sayings of our Lord; but the distinction between them and our Gospels is as manifest as that between Mother Goose's melodies and the writings of Milton or Shakespeare. Read the whole Christian literature of the early centuries, and then turn to the New Testament. The transition is like passing from darkness and confusion, into light and order. There have been countless lives of Christ written since then, but

what one of them can be placed alongside of the marvellous originals? On what natural grounds can we account for this singular separation? The explanation of divine guidance for the apostolic writers, is the only rational and sufficient solution.

It could also be readily shown how this apostolic testimony is confirmed by prophecy, and by the work of the Holy Spirit. But, surely, enough has been said to show that we are not without a reasonable warrant for the divine origin of our holy faith; a warrant that far surpasses in reasonableness and force, that which can be furnished in behalf of any other. A religion that comes to men thus authenticated, certainly demands their reverent, serious, and honest consideration. I do not claim for this statement, the force of a demonstration that Christianity is divine, but only this: That a fair, candid consideration of the testimony will lead to such moral certainty as will both justify a man in seeking his salvation in Jesus Christ alone, and make it his duty to do so. As Christian teachers, we are not so foolish as to suppose that saving faith is created by argument. It comes alone from looking at its object, Jesus Christ, as presented in the Gospel. Millions who know nothing of the external evidences of Christianity, have a most certain persuasion that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, because they have looked directly to Him in simple faith, and found in Him eternal life.

No argument, not even death itself, can shake this conviction. Out of the deep, clear consciousness of a new life in Christ, they say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

There is, after all, but one way by which we can arrive at certainty in the Christian faith, and that is not by argument. It is the old way of which the Psalmist testifies: "Oh, taste, and see that the Lord is good." It is the way our Lord points out when He said: "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." St. John writes: "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself."

Happy are they who have found their way into life by this simple, direct road, which is open to all. Let no man despise that traditional, inherited faith which has led so many to look reverentially toward Jesus Christ; and in seeing Him, they believed with a new and higher faith. But when true faith is eclipsed, or traditional faith shaken, the argument from the evidences of Christianity has its uses. Furthermore, the argument to be conclusive as to duty, need not be a demonstration of the divinity of our faith. It is enough if it can show in the highest degree of probability, that it is of God. All we design

by it, is to turn your attention with good reason to Jesus Christ, and in Him alone can you find rest.

Suppose that it is greatly to your advantage to go to England, and you wish to go safely. At the sea-shore you find various sea-going crafts, from the little "dory" to the Cunard steamer. The latter, from all you hear, is the best. You examine it, and everything about its appointments, commends it to you. It has not its equal afloat. You ask about its security, and are informed that since its organization that Line has never lost a vessel, or a passenger at sea. But you ask the chief officer, "Is there not a possibility that the vessel might be lost on this voyage? Can you show me, beyond all doubt, that you can take me safely over?" As an honest man he says, "No." And if you will not venture until this doubt is removed, there is nothing left for you but to stay at home, or venture to sea in some vessel of your own contrivance.

But what opinion must reasonable, fair-minded men have of your position? So here, we have shown you that as far as a safe entrance into the eternal world is concerned, there is nothing that so commends itself to sinful men, as the religion that has Jesus Christ for its founder. It comes to us with marks of its divine origin, so clear and transcendent in glory, that there is nothing else to be compared to it. It is admitted on every side, to be superior to all others. The probabilities, at least, are all in its favor. Why not

then, act with reference to it as you do toward other important affairs in life? As you would commit your bodily life to the vessel that was most highly recommended to you, to cross the sea, and not to an inferior one, so commit your soul-life to this faith in which millions have lived in peace, and died in holy triumph. Come honestly to the divine Redeemer, and you will soon have that deeper and higher experience which will enable you to say, "I know."

> "Oh, make but trial of His love,
> Experience will decide
> How blest are they, and only they,
> Who in His truth confide."

As for myself, I can testify that when I look into the apostolic testimony, seeking to find Him of whom the apostles bear witness, I see its pages beaming with a light such as I find in no other book—a light that reveals me to myself, humbles me, condemns me, yet opens to me a new world abounding in hope and mercy. I hear from it a voice, as of Eternal Truth, speaking in accents of tenderest love. I look, and see a Person—a man crowned with thorns and dying on a cross, yet more than a man! He is One whose every look and word and deed proclaim His eternal and uncreated origin in the bosom of the Father; and in His presence, as all doubt vanishes, I can cry, with a joyful certainty such as no argument ever brought me, "*My Lord and my God.*"

II.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE RESURRECTION.

W. W. BOYD, D.D.

II.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE RESURRECTION.

DEARLY BELOVED: The Rector of St. George's church, in a most fraternal Christian spirit, has asked of me "a reason concerning the hope that is in me," the ground upon which I believe in Jesus as the Christ. I deem it a grateful privilege in this presence to declare, "with meekness and fear and a good conscience," that I believe in Jesus as the Christ, and have committed myself to Him in confidence for time and to eternity, because He died for my sins and rose again for my justification. Is my hope built upon a sure foundation? It will be my aim to show that it is, by dwelling chiefly upon two points:

I. The resurrection of Jesus is an historic fact.

II. The resurrection of Jesus as an historic fact is a firm basis of personal faith in Him.

I. The resurrection of Jesus is an historic fact.

By an historic fact I mean that the resurrection of Jesus is an event that actually took place. It is not a doctrine, an opinion, a philosophical or theological no-

tion; it is an event, an actual occurrence, a fact. Then it must stand the test of historical criticism. It must be established by a reasonable amount of evidence, which is clear, honest, and identical with what the student of history demands in all other questions of an historical kind. Dogmatism here is impossible. The scientific method alone is the true one. As the student of natural science must deduce the laws of nature from well-established facts repeatedly tested in the laboratory of experiment, so the student of history must examine and re-examine, by the established canons of evidence, the witnesses upon whose testimony any event is presented for acceptance before he can make an authoritative utterance as to its reality. Precisely, then, as we would prove the reality of any other historical event—as, for example, that Brutus slew Cæsar in the Senate at Rome—the fact of Jesus' resurrection must be submitted to the laws of scientific historical criticism, and must stand this crucial test before reason can assent to its truthfulness. God asks no one, neither should His ministers, to believe any fact of revelation without reasonable evidence of its truth.

Before proceeding to apply the scientific method to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, allow me to say, that the admirable and comprehensive lecture of Dr. Niccolls upon "The Apostolic Testimony," renders it unnecessary for me to review the grounds

upon which the authenticity of the books of the New Testament rests. With your permission I shall, therefore, assume much of that which he so ably proved and allude to the authenticity of the writings from which I quote, only when it is essential to the development of my argument. In a spirit of candor, then, let us proceed to submit the fact of the resurrection of Jesus to the test of historical criticism.

1. Certain facts are universally conceded. These facts are that a man named Jesus Christ was born in Judea in the reign of Herod, the Tetrarch, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate; that He was a person of marvellous endowments, of spotless character, and of wonderful power as an ethical teacher; that He drew about Him a band of disciples, twelve of whom were called apostles; that after His crucifixion numerous local assemblies of His disciples were formed; that within a few years of His death there existed throughout the then known world these churches, of which there has been a continuous succession from the time of the apostles until now. These are undisputed facts, established from the writings of the Jewish historian, Josephus, the Roman Tacitus and Pliny, and the Christian Paul of whose four Epistles—First and Second Corinthians, Romans and Galatians—the sceptic Renan writes: "Not the slightest doubt has been raised by serious criticism against their authen-

ticity."* In these Epistles Paul declares that Jesus rose from the dead, and, in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, he bases an exhaustive argument for the resurrection of the dead upon the fact of Christ's resurrection. Bear in mind that, as Godet says: "The authenticity of this Epistle has never in any age been disputed by any one, neither is it disputed in our own day by any person whatever. All agree it was written at Ephesus about 58 A.D., twenty-five years after the death of Jesus."† It is most fortunate that we have this substantial foundation of undisputed facts, upon which all may stand in perfect confidence. We hear an authentic voice sounding out down the centuries its calm, assuring testimony concerning the fact of the resurrection.

2. Listen to this testimony and examine the witness. The testimony is given in epitome in 1 Corinthians xv. 3–9: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures: and that He was buried, and that He hath been raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures; and that He appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of

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* "Life of Jesus," p. 35.

† "Defence of the Christian Faith."

whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then He appeared to James; then to all the apostles, and last of all, as unto one born out of due time, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, because I persecuted the Church of God." This is the testimony.

Examine the witness—Paul. He was a Jewish convert to Christianity. Born in Tarsus, he inherited from his father the citizenship of Rome, which in the case of a Jew could have been secured only by purchase. This fact declares his good social position. Reared in Tarsus, he mastered the Greek language and literature. Between the age of ten and fifteen he was sent to Jerusalem to be taught "according to the perfect manner of the law of his fathers." Here for years he "sat at the feet" of Gamaliel, the most learned Jewish rabbi of that age, and became the strictest of the Pharisees. He was doubtless living in Jerusalem at the very time when Jesus was crucified; most certainly he was there two years afterward, for he held the clothes of those who stoned the martyr Stephen, and "consented unto his death." From this time he was an open and most bitter persecutor of the disciples of Christ. "He laid waste the Church, entering every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison." But within six years of the crucifixion this unrelenting persecutor, on an official mission to Damascus to stamp out the new

faith there, was suddenly and marvellously converted to Christ, and during the twenty years that elapsed between his conversion and the writing of this first letter to the Corinthians, he not only himself believed, but was constantly preaching, amid the severest hardships and persecutions, the fact of Christ's resurrection. His writings show him to have been a man of great learning, profound reasoning powers, and intense emotion. The Rev. Dr. Peabody, of Cambridge —one of the most eminent ministers in the Unitarian denomination and a man of great erudition—writes concerning Paul: "We can not but regard him as the first man of his age, and we can name no man of any age who seems to us greater than he."

Such was the man who, before he wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians, for twenty years—beginning within six years of the crucifixion—the most momentous part of the epoch of apostolic evangelization, had been preaching Jesus and the resurrection. As there is no doubt what was the sum and substance of his preaching after his conversion, so there is no doubt what was the preaching of the apostles for the six years before his conversion. From writings of unquestioned authenticity it is evident, that from the beginning of their ministry the apostles proclaimed the fact of the resurrection to which Paul, now in the prime of life, adds his testimony.

3. Examine now in detail Paul's testimony, the

evidence upon which he asserts the resurrection of Jesus, in connection with the concurrent testimony of others. He enumerates six separate testimonies to the resurrection: First, That of Cephas or Peter, the most notable and distinguished of the original twelve, who, it seems from an allusion in Luke's Gospel, on the very morning of the resurrection had a personal interview with the risen Christ. What occurred at this interview is not stated. Second, That of the twelve. The apostolic college, though consisting of only eleven since the fall of Judas, was still denominated "The Twelve." They testified to the appearance of the risen Lord in their midst, when only ten of them were present—Thomas being absent—on the evening of the same day that He rose; and to a second appearance eight days later, when, Thomas being present, Jesus thoroughly satisfied him that He indeed was risen. The evangelists Luke, Mark, and John corroborate Paul. Third, That of above five hundred brethren at once. This, doubtless, was the meeting on a mountain in Galilee, which Jesus had provided for before His death; and to which both the angels and the risen Lord Himself bade the women, on the morning of the resurrection, to summon the disciples. The apostles must have been at this assembly, and here received their great commission. Fourth, That of James, who must have been alive when Paul wrote, and from whose own lips Paul on his visit to Jeru-

salem must have received the testimony. Fifth, That of all the apostles together. This appearance, which Luke also describes, was the last time the twelve looked upon the Lord. They beheld Him in the glory of His ascension. Sixth, That of Paul himself. He himself had seen the risen Jesus; had spoken to Him; had heard His voice. It was then that he became at once a believer and an apostle.

But why did not Paul include in this summary the testimony of the women and of Mary Magdalene, to whom Jesus appeared on the morning of the resurrection, as recorded by the evangelists; and also the testimony of the two disciples to whom He showed Himself the very day He rose on the way to Emmaus? The answer is plain. Because Paul is here declaring the *apostolic* testimony to the fact of the resurrection. He must, therefore, bring forward the evidence of the apostles only; he must enumerate only those appearances that had been granted to apostles, either individually or in company with others, "they being the constituted witnesses." When one was to be chosen to fill the place of Judas, Peter insisted that the selection must be made from those "which having companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto the day that He was received up from us; of these must one be-

come a witness with us of His resurrection."* And Paul, therefore, makes no allusion to the two on the way to Emmaus, because they were not apostles, but simply disciples, as the narrative of Luke shows. Nor does he refer to the testimony of the women for the same reason; and perhaps also because, writing as he was to a Greek church, he well knew that "among the Greeks women were not competent witnesses."† Paul presented only such testimony as would be unimpeachable in the judgment of the Corinthian church. To that we may rightly add the written testimony of the Gospels.

Prof. Holtzmann, of Heidelberg, a pronounced Rationalist, concludes his exhaustive study of the authenticity of the Gospels "by declaring the results of modern labors on this subject to be in perfect agreement with the traditions of the most ancient ecclesiastical writers; namely, in affirming the writings which form the basis of our first three Gospels, and these Gospels themselves, to have been drawn up between the years 60 and 80 of our era"; that is to say, not more than from thirty to fifty years after the Lord's death.‡

The Gospel of John he puts toward the end of the first century, the limit of John's life. This utterance

* Acts i. 21, 22.

† "Proofs of the Resurrection," Morrison, p. 116.

‡ Quoted from Godet.

of so prominent a free-thinker as Prof. Holtzmann, is a serious set-back to the bold attempt of the modern school of destructive critics to make it appear that our Gospels were not written until the middle of the second century. In fact, so firmly has the authenticity of the books of the New Testament been established by modern critical study, that the disciples of the destructive school have well-nigh ceased their assaults upon the New Testament to try their hand upon the Old Testament as a more hopeful point of attack. The evangelists give every mark of honest witnesses. Their story is simple and clear. The differences in minor points of detail show that they were independent witnesses. Together they exhibit in striking unity the character and life of Christ.

Dr. Godet, Professor of Theology at Neufchatel, in his "Defence of Christianity," combines with ease all these testimonies to the appearance of our risen Lord into a complete and consistent narrative. After His resurrection Jesus' first work was to administer comfort and reassurance to His scattered and disheartened followers. This He did at once on the first day, by His appearance to Mary and the other women, to the two on the way to Emmaus, to Peter and the twelve. The burden of all His salutations was, "Peace be unto you." Then Jesus must bring back the one wanderer, Thomas, and satisfy his honest doubts. This filled up the following days. When

the separated disciples had been reunited and the unity of the apostolic college restored, He sent them all back to Galilee, where He had agreed to meet them. And having fulfilled His promise, and given to the apostles their great commission, He brings them again to Jerusalem, where they are to tarry until they were "endued with power from on high"; and then, in a last, most tender and solemn appearance, He leads them out toward Bethany, when, rising upon the waiting chariot of the cloud of glory and blessing them, rising still higher and still blessing, He is borne up out of their sight. Calmly review, now, this mass of testimony to the fact of Christ's resurrection. We have the solemn asseveration of three evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke; of three of the leading apostles, Peter, John, and Paul; and, finally, the concurrent testimony of the whole primitive Church as represented by above five hundred persons, of whom, Paul says, "the greater part" were still alive, when he wrote to the Corinthians, and who, therefore, could be appealed to in confirmation or denial of his statement. Moreover, the fact of the resurrection of Jesus was the one great theme of apostolic preaching, as the book of the Acts shows, from the day of Pentecost; that is, from only fifty days after the crucifixion. There can be no doubt as to what the apostles maintained. Paul declares that Christ "died" and "was buried" and

was "raised on the third day."* Luke asserts that "He showed Himself alive after His passion unto the apostles whom He had chosen, by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God."† Peter claims that "God raised Him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it"; and, again, "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we are all witnesses."‡

These utterances are sufficient to show the manner in which the apostles declared the fact of the resurrection. What shall we then say of their testimony? Testimony both oral and written, is it credible? Is it worthy of our acceptance? For eighteen hundred years the Christian Church has maintained that the apostles wrote and preached as they did because they believed the great fact of the resurrection, and because they had such evidence of that stupendous fact that they could not do otherwise. Is not this the natural and obvious explanation of the apostolic testimony and ministry? But other explanations have been urged, and we must, therefore, examine them. For we can not accept even what seems to us an obvious conclusion, without submitting it to every possible assault. We must sift this matter to the bottom.

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* 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. † Acts i. 3. ‡ Acts ii. 24, 32.

4. Infidelity has brought forward but three explanations of this apostolic testimony. It can bring no others. First. It has been claimed that the apostles were dishonest. They testified to that which they knew to be false. A similar charge of fraud was made in the very age of the apostles. After the Roman guard informed the High Priests of the marvellous scenes on the morning of the resurrection at the empty tomb, the hastily summoned Sanhedrin, having consulted together, bribed the soldiers to say that Christ's disciples came by night and stole His body while they slept. And thirty years after the crucifixion we find that this story was still believed by Jews. Modern infidelity does not repeat this story, which is absurd on the face of it, for no Roman soldier would confess to sleeping at his post of duty, the inexorable penalty of which was death. But it re-echoes the same charge of fraud by asserting that the apostles, having once made the cause of Jesus their own, were of necessity compelled to maintain it even at the cost of deception. But the notion that so vast a body of persons as composed the Christian Church of the apostolic age, could be induced to construct and disseminate so gross a cheat, and so circumstantially, too, is wholly inadmissible. Only think of it. During those first twenty years of apostolic evangelism, hundreds of men were going about into all the cities and villages of the Roman Empire

telling everybody they met that they had seen with their own eyes, and heard with their own ears, Jesus Christ, the Crucified One, after He had risen from the dead; and yet all the while they must have been conscious that they never had seen or heard anything of the sort, but that the whole thing was a base lie. And so far from receiving any advantage from making this false statement, their labors everywhere only exposed them to derision, hatred, persecution, and even death itself. Did the world ever, before or since, witness such a phenomenon? To accept the theory that the apostles were dishonest, we have the inexplicable mystery of "a conspiracy to cheat the world into piety, honesty, and charity." Who can doubt the sincerity of such a man as Paul? The theory of fraud on the part of the apostles is now rejected, even by infidels, as morally impossible.

Baur, of the Tübingen school, says: "History must hold to the assertion that to the faith of the disciples the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a fact, certain and indisputable. It is in this faith only, that Christianity found a ground solid enough to erect upon it the superstructure of its whole historic development." *

Strauss says: "The historian must acknowledge that the disciples firmly believed that Jesus was

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* "Drei Ersten Jahrhunderte," Second Ed., pp. 39, 40.

risen." Again: "The fact that the apostle Paul heard from the mouth of Peter, of James, and of others besides, that Jesus had appeared to them, and that they all, and the five hundred brethren also, were absolutely convinced that they had seen Jesus living, after He had died, is one which we will not call into question." * Honest doubt, therefore, as to the sincerity of the apostolic testimony is impossible, sceptics themselves being the judges.

Again: It has been urged by some sceptical writers, that though the apostles undoubtedly were honest in believing that Jesus rose, they were mistaken in thinking that He was really dead. The fact was that what they thought was death in His case was merely a swoon or death faint. But this theory simply shifts the falsehood from the apostles to Christ. Adopting this view, what becomes of the moral character of Christ, which infidels of every school delight to portray? What shall we think of a person who plainly on several occasions foretells to His disciples His approaching death; then apparently, but not really, dies; then pretends to have risen from the dead, then after a lapse of forty days suddenly disappears, and leaves His credulous disciples to proclaim to the world the fact of His resurrection, and to suffer untold misery in founding upon His utter deception a

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* "Life of Jesus," p. 289.

church to bear His name and to perpetuate His memory to the end of time, in an ordinance that every time it is observed declares in its emblems of bread and wine that He really died for men—what shall we think of such gross deception? We can not, I repeat, hold that the resurrection was a return from mere lethargy, or trance, or swoon, without destroying the moral character of Christ.

But we have irrefragable evidence that Jesus actually died. Conceive, if possible, the mental and physical strain upon Him during His passion, the awful struggle of Gethsemane, the cruel mockings of the judgment hall, the fearful laceration of the Roman scourging, the dreadful exhaustive bearing of His cross to Golgotha, the murderous driving of the iron spikes into the quivering flesh of His hands and feet, the tremendous shock upon His whole nervous system as the cross, borne aloft by His rugged executioners, was shot with a quick bound into its prepared socket; and then those six long, weary, fearful hours as He hung suspended in mid-air, subjected to the jeers of His enemies, parched with thirst, and His tender, sensitive heart so full of desolate anguish that He thought that even His Father had forsaken Him, bursting forth at the climax of His agony: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" How could His heart keep from breaking, and His body from "yielding up the ghost"? Roman executioners

made sure work. They examined His body and pronounced Him dead. But to make assurance doubly sure, "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and straightway there came out blood and water. And he that saw it hath borne witness and his witness is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe." *

What next? The friends of Jesus beg for His body that they may give it a decent burial. But no, Pilate refuses his consent to its removal until an official examination is instituted, and he knows that Jesus is dead. And what then? The lifeless form is swathed from head to foot in linen bands and put into a tomb, closed with an official seal, where it remains, according to the testimony of the Roman guard, a whole day and two nights. And yet, notwithstanding all the mental and physical strain of His agony and crucifixion, all the expedients resorted to in order to make sure of His death, and to prevent His escape from the sepulchre, some would have us believe that on the third morning thereafter the bruised, lacerated, and crushed Son of Man, having undergone no miraculous change, but having simply recovered from a fainting fit, walked for two hours a distance of several miles to Emmaus! Behold the credulity of unbelief! More recent sceptical writers

* John xix. 34, 35.

treat this theory with contempt. Strauss writes: "A man half dead, dragging himself in languor and exhaustion out of his tomb, with wounds requiring careful and continuous medical treatment—could he, in such a state, have produced upon the minds of the disciples the impression that he was victor over death and the grave, the Prince of Life—an impression which nevertheless was the source and spring of all their subsequent activity? Such a return to life could only have served to weaken the impressions which Jesus had in His former life made upon their minds by His life and death, and could never have turned their sorrow into enthusiasm and intensified their admiration into adoration." *

Once more: There is only one other possible sceptical explanation of the apostolic testimony. If the apostles were not dishonest, and if they were not mistaken concerning His death, then the appearances of Christ after His death were simply hallucinations on their part, mere visions of their excited imaginations. This is the view now maintained by most infidel writers. Their reasoning has an air of plausibility. Jesus actually died upon the cross, say they, but His supposed reappearances, though honestly believed in by the disciples, were, after all, mere illusions on their part, resulting from the intensity of their feelings toward Him. Mary, to whom the first

* "Life of Jesus," p. 298.

appearance came, was no doubt unsound in her mind. Through her the illusion was communicated gradually to the apostles, and so throughout the whole church. Moreover, by the very law of association, every part of the country that had been frequented by Christ would awaken in the minds of His loyal disciples wherever they went memories of Him, until they became actually morbid in their feelings, and consequently imagined that they saw Him just as they had been wont to see Him. The belief of Paul that he had seen the risen Saviour is accounted for in much the same way. He was a man of very excitable nervous temperament, subject to epileptic attacks, and predisposed to see visions. Let us see if this theory of visions will stand the ordeal of facts.

First, the theory takes it for granted that all the appearances of Jesus to His disciples occurred in Galilee. This is not true. Only two of them were in Galilee. Most of them were in and about Jerusalem. The assumption of the power of association to produce these appearances is purely gratuitous. Again, the theory assumes that the apostles believed in the fact of the resurrection because of Mary's faith. This is pure fiction. Peter and John had found the sepulchre empty before Mary announced that Christ was risen; and the sight of the empty tomb had already caused John to believe.* Mark

* John xx. 8.

says that when Mary "came and told them" that "He was alive and had been seen of her," they "disbelieved." * And Luke, relating the effect upon them of the news brought by the whole company of women, says, their words "appeared in their sight as idle talk, and they disbelieved them." † There is not the slightest mention of Mary's statement in the Gospel of Matthew or in the Acts of the Apostles, or in any of the epistles. In enumerating the testimonies to the resurrection, Paul does not even mention Mary. Indeed, it would almost seem as if the apostles anticipated this modern infidel objection to the resurrection, and purposely refrained from quoting the appearances to Mary and the other women. Renan's boast that "the glory of the resurrection belongs to Mary of Magdala," does not stand the test of the facts.

Once more: The nature of the appearances is directly opposed to the visionary theory. It was in no ethereal, intangible, unearthly form that Christ appeared. He afforded them the same kind of proof of His real existence after His resurrection that He did before His death. He walked with them, held prolonged talks with them, instructed them, ate before them and with them, explained the Scriptures to them, gave them the Magna Charta of the Church in which He commanded them to go into all the

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* Mark xvi. 11. † Luke xxiv. 11.

world and proclaim the "Good News," and lastly gave them absolute proof of His corporeal presence, once at His first meeting with the twelve, when "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? And why do reasonings arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having. And when He had said this He showed them His hands and His feet."* And yet again, eight days later, when Thomas, who had been absent from the first interview and would not believe without the absolute demonstration of touch, was present, Jesus appeared and said: "Thomas, reach hither thy finger and see my hands; and reach thy hand and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." That satisfied Thomas that it was indeed the same Jesus, that had been crucified, risen from the dead. "My Lord and my God," he exclaimed.† Doubtless it was to these ocular and sensible proofs of Christ's resurrection that John referred in his First Epistle when he said, "That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the word of life; that which we have seen and heard

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* Luke xxiv. 37–40. † John xx. 24–28.

declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." * My friends, if Jesus really rose from the dead, what proof of that fact could have been given to the disciples that was not given? The eye, the ear, the touch—all were satisfied to the utmost—not at any one time, but at many different times and under varying circumstances throughout the space of forty days. Hallucination, therefore, is an impossible theory, if, as sceptics admit, the apostles are honest in their testimony.

Still again: The number of these appearances, and the peculiar character of some of them, forbids belief in the theory of visions. If only one appearance had been granted, and that to Mary, this theory might have some standing. But there were at least ten separate appearances, under ten different sets of circumstances. This fact alone would militate against the view that they were mere creations of the fancy. But some of these appearances entirely exclude such a supposition. For instance, Christ appears to the two on the way to Emmaus. Their eyes are holden so that they do not recognize Him. They are in a most despondent mood,—the opposite condition of mind which this theory demands. For six miles Jesus walks

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* 1 John i. 1–3.

with them; for two hours He explains the prophecies concerning Himself to them. These peculiar circumstances prove that this could not have been a vision. Had there been but one disciple, it could scarcely be believed that such an experience was a mere fancy. But here are two men who seem to have given up all hope that Christ would rise. And yet, at the end of their interview with Christ, when He reveals His real identity to them, they hurry back over the six-mile road again to carry the glad tidings to the apostles, so completely convinced are they of the great fact itself. Or take the appearance of which Paul speaks, "to above 500 brethren at once." Can you conceive it possible that 500 persons should be drawn from their homes to a mountain by sheer force of hallucination, and all of them at once under the power of that hallucination, so that they all testified that a certain person was present upon that mountain and addressed them who was not there at all? Can you conceive of such a phenomenon? Would it not require greater faith to believe that such an occurrence was possible than to believe that Jesus Christ was really there Himself in His resurrected body?

And yet again: If the theory of visions is correct, how shall we account for the fact that, with the exception of the appearance to Paul, and with the doubtful exception of that to John, on the Isle of Patmos, these appearances of Jesus completely ceased

after the ascension? "None of the disciples, under any excitement, ever again saw their Lord as the man Christ Jesus walking the earth, as before; or saw Him coming to the earth, although they all believed that He would speedily return in like manner as they saw Him going into Heaven." On the ground that all these former appearances were mere visions, how shall we account for their abrupt and sudden cessation? If these delusions created the faith in the resurrection, then we should expect the faith to multiply the delusions. But all at once the appearances ceased. As Prof. Godet says: "If at least it could be said that this cessation of the visions corresponded with a gradual weakening of the enthusiasm of the Church, one might suppose that the visions ceased when the religious excitement began to decline. But the very opposite of this is shown by history to have been the case. The visions stopped exactly at the moment when enthusiasm was at its height, and when we should have expected them to have increased in number, and to have continued for months and years." The sceptic can not account for this fact; but the apostolic testimony does. The appearances ceased because the risen Lord ascended to the place of power, no longer to be known after the flesh, but to be far better known and understood by the presence of His living spirit in human hearts. Though many more facts might be cited to show the absurdity of this

theory of visions—the final refuge of modern infidels —a sufficient number has been presented, I trust, to convince any reasonable person of its utter invalidity and falsity. It is certain that such illusions, improbable under any circumstances, could only be possible to minds under the strong excitement of restored faith. But how could the apostles, who knew that their Master was dead and His cause utterly shipwrecked, gain faith enough to produce the strong imagination, not in one mind alone, but in the minds of all, that they saw Him actually alive from the dead? It is a psychological impossibility. The theory of visions, like the two former theories, is untenable.

What, now, is the result of our examination? It is acknowledged by infidels that the apostles were honest in their testimony. It is also freely granted that they were not deceived as to the death of Jesus. And we have sufficient proof, only a part of which has been presented, that the appearances of Christ were not hallucinations on the part of the disciples. There is but one alternative remaining, and that is that the natural and obvious explanation of the testimony of the apostles is true, namely, that Jesus Christ, who died and was buried, did rise from the dead. "And show Himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus is an historic fact.

The evidence upon which it rests has been sifted and found convincing to the greatest intellects. No event is better attested than the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

II. Let us now consider our second point: The historic fact of the resurrection of Jesus is a firm basis of personal faith in Him.

1. Because it authenticates His divine character and mission.

On various occasions Jesus foretold His death, and hinted at His resurrection. But, as He was going up to Jerusalem to the Passover, at which He was to suffer, He announced His resurrection to the twelve apart, in the plainest words: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death; and shall deliver Him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify; and the third day He shall be raised up."* Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record these memorable words.† His predictions of His death and resurrection are so interwoven into the entire evangelic narrative that we can not take them out and retain any of His recorded acts and words as true. Had Christ not risen from the dead He would have proved Himself to be

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* Matthew xx. 18, 19.

† Mark x. 33, 34; Luke xviii. 31–34.

an impostor and blasphemer of the basest sort. Empty indeed is Christian faith if Christ did not rise from the dead. There is absolutely no middle ground; either Jesus was what He claimed to be or He was not. If He was, His resurrection was already assured. If He was not, He could not have been the Son of God. His resurrection, therefore, was a moral necessity from His character as drawn by the four evangelists. "But now is Christ risen from the dead;" then He was what He claimed to be; then His words are true; then by His resurrection God set the seal of His approval upon Him, and by the mysterious workings in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea evermore declares to the whole universe of created intelligences: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Surely an event accompanied by so many details, and testified to by so many witnesses, is the most public and complete proof that the mind of man can desire of the divine commission of Jesus Christ. All that He ever spoke must be possessed of divine authority. The Gospel He declared must be, in its whole extent and in its every part, the will of God to man. Paul writes to the Romans that Christ "was declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." * Moreover, Jesus Him-

* Romans i. 4.

self, when appealed to for a miraculous attestation of His claims as the Messiah, declared His resurrection above all other miracles to be the sufficient and only proof: "There shall no sign be given but the sign of Jonah, the prophet; for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* The expression, "three days and three nights," is employed according to a received rule among the Jews, that a part of a day is put for the whole. His resurrection, therefore, is no ordinary miracle; it is no mere accident. It is an essential part of the divine plan of salvation; an extraordinary event graciously vouchsafed by Almighty God as a sure and immovable foundation for our faith in Christ. Hence the apostle John, after recording certain appearances of the risen Jesus, says: "Many other signs, therefore, did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye may have life in His name."†

2. By the resurrection of Christ we know that He had power to impart to His apostles, to whom it was given to establish the Christian Church, and to Paul, as the special apostle to the Gentiles, the ability to

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* Matthew xii. 39, 40. † John xx. 30–31.

explain and formulate Christian truth, and to confirm their teaching by miraculous signs. For by His resurrection we have confidence in His words and power. And we have the record that at His first appearance to the twelve He said: "As the Father hath sent me, even so I send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye forgive they are forgiven unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained." * And again, on the mountain in Galilee, He said to the same apostles: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you; and lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world." †

In virtue, then, of these words, confirmed by His resurrection, our faith may securely rest upon apostolic teaching, and by that teaching we, in turn, may better understand what the resurrection means for ourselves. The concurrent apostolic interpretation of the resurrection of Christ, as related to us, is given by Paul in Romans. The faith of Abraham, he says, was "reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now, it

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* John xx. 21, 23. † Matthew xxviii. 16–20.

was not written for Abraham's sake alone that faith was reckoned unto him, but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned, who believe on Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up for our trespasses and was raised up for our justification." * In Paul's mind, then, the death and resurrection of Jesus were not separated, isolated events, but parts of the one and the self-same stupendous action. Each involved the other. If Jesus died for our sins, He rose again for our justification. The faith, then, that grasps one must lay hold of the other. To believe in His resurrection and then to deny His atoning death, is impossible ; or to believe in His atoning death and then to deny His resurrection, is equally impossible. Both stand or fall together. Therefore, in "staking life and all that life holds dear" upon the fact of Christ's resurrection, the apostles declared with equal emphasis "Christ and Him crucified."

And in proclaiming, as Paul did, that "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,"—that is, publicly acknowledge Him as Lord and Master—"and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,"† the necessity of the death of Christ was by no means ignored, but most certainly included.

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* Romans iv. 22–25. † Romans x. 9.

This, then, is the simple Gospel, as the "good news" comes to me both from Christ and His apostles: "Christ was delivered up for our trespasses; I am a sinner, the law of God condemns me; Jesus died to bring me into reconciliation with God." That is one side of it. "Christ was raised up for our justification; Jesus died for me, God forgave me, Christ rose from the dead to assure me of that fact." Here, then, is a solid foundation for my faith. His resurrection gives me implicit confidence in Himself. I can not doubt His Word, or the words of His ordained apostles. He and they both assure me that God has forgiven me. I trust in that Word, and, lo! I have the witness in myself, a superadded testimony, "the Spirit of God witnessing" with my spirit, that I am a child of God, a restored child, a forgiven child, an adopted child, and with confidence I now draw near my God, and cry, "Abba, Father."

3. The resurrection of Jesus is a firm basis of personal faith in Him because it illustrates what Christianity means. It is Christianity embodied in action. His resurrection is the prophecy of what restored humanity is destined to be, and the pledge to every believer of all that enters into our faith and hope. "Now, if Christ is preached that He hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been

raised. But now hath Christ been raised from the dead the first-fruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order (or regiment): Christ the first-fruits (the great commander rises first), then (in the next rank) they that are Christ's at His coming."* He, though the Son of God, died, and was laid in the grave; but, assured that He rose from it a conqueror, we too, by faith in Him, may gladly lie in the grave also, for in due time we shall come forth from it conquerors in our turn. It is said that a century ago an infidel German countess, dying, ordered that her grave be covered with a solid granite slab; that around should be placed solid blocks of stone, and the whole be fastened together by strong iron clamps, and that on the stone be cut these words: "This burial-place, purchased to all eternity, must never be opened." But a little seed sprouted under the covering, and the tiny shoot found its way through between two of the slabs, and grew there slowly and surely until it burst the clamps asunder, and, lifting the immense blocks, the structure ere long became a confused mass of rock, among which, in verdure and beauty, grew the giant oak which had thus broken the bars of the sepulchre.

* 1 Corinthians xv. 12–14, 20–23.

In every grave on earth's green sward is the tiny seed of the resurrection life of our Lord — in the graves of our kindred, our fathers and mothers and children and friends; and that seed can not perish, it will germinate when the warm south wind of Christ's return brings back the spring-time to this cold, desolate, sin-cursed earth of ours; and they that are in their graves, and we who shall lie down in ours, will feel in our mortal bodies the power of His resurrection and come forth. And over every sepulchre of the Blessed Dead, above the mute witnesses of their long slumber, shall grow in beauty and eternal freshness the tree of life.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!

III.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE PERSONALITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

C. P. MASDEN, D.D.

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."—MATTHEW xvi. 13–16.

III.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE PERSONALITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

NEARLY nineteen centuries ago, there appeared a new moral force in human society, the most wonderful phenomenon in all human history. So evident is this, that time is measured from that epoch, the world sets its clock at that date, and every letter and every contract is headed "Anno Domini"—the year of our Lord.

This new moral force has deepened and widened and gathered momentum with the centuries, and now is the colossal miracle of the ages; leavening society, permeating literature, the inspiration of poetry and art, the power back of governments and thrones, the civilizing agency in all lands, the dawning of the reign of peace and righteousness.

This marked crisis in human history, when prophecy culminated and a new religion, called Christianity, took form and began its world-wide conquests, focalized in the Personality of Jesus Christ, who was "born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the days of Herod the king."

To be "born" sets up a new fact, as immortal as God. It introduces new ministries and forces in the universe, and always carries with it responsibilities and possibilities. But the birth of Jesus Christ was unique, and attended with supernatural signs—fore-announced by an angel, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, celebrated by the heavenly host, and the place of birth indicated by the hovering star. Persian astrologers came four months' journey to see the One who was born, not as King of the Persians, but King of the Jews, and "they worshipped Him." Why this angel? Why this miraculous conception? Why this angelic choir and guiding star and inquiring priests and adoring magi?

Such a *moral force*, introduced into the world in such a strange way, leads us to inquire, Who was Jesus Christ? What is His personality? What is the power of His character, and the philosophy of the success of the religion He founded?

Christ as a historical personage I assume as a fact generally admitted. I base this fact, however, upon the testimony of the Gospel records as historically true (to say nothing of their inspiration); the voice of secular historians, such as Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian the apostate; and the origin and history of the Christian Church. The same argument which proves the existence of Cæsar and the Roman Empire, Washington and the United

States, also proves the existence of Jesus Christ and the Christian Church.

This fact of a historical Christ is not questioned by any intelligent and honest scholar or historian. Nay more, they admit His supreme goodness and greatness.

Rousseau, one of the leaders of French infidelity, says: "If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus Christ are those of a God."

Goethe, whom we do not at all regard as a Christian poet, calls Christ "the Divine Man," "the Holy One." Thomas Carlyle calls His life a "perfect ideal poem," and His Person "the greatest of all heroes." Renan, who views Jesus Christ from the stand-point of Pantheistic naturalism, and expels all miracles from the Gospel history, says: "Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed"; "All ages will proclaim that, among the sons of men, there is none born greater than Jesus." Strauss, who has written one of the strongest works against the credibility of Gospel history, as to the miraculous and supernatural, says: "To have religion without Christ would be as absurd as to enjoy poetry without regard to Homer and Shakespeare." John Stuart Mill says: "Let rational criticism take from us what it may, it still leaves us the Christ." Christ as a historical personage, and as a good man and the founder

of the Christian religion, is not the issue of our times, and is not the topic of debate in this age.

His character—His personality, becomes the centre of conflict, and the strongest and surest credential in favor of the Divine origin of Christianity. Hence we inquire, who is He?

Jesus Christ is the central fact in the Christian Church to-day. We differ in names, confessions, polity, and usages, but we agree in our love and adoration of Jesus. We lay down our differences at the Manger of Bethlehem and the Cross of Calvary. Christ is the Divine harmony of all human sects and creeds, and the common life-centre of all Christians. Hence we are all equally interested in this question of the hour, who is He?

I answer in brief epitome of His character. He was *original*, *consistent*, and *perfect;* and thus lifted out of a mere human life or realm, He stands forth as a new character in human history. Christ is manhood at its climax.

Neither the ages prior, nor centuries since, have produced His equal. He is the head of a new race, the crown and glory of creation.

HIS CHARACTER WAS ORIGINAL.

The creations of poetry, the systems of philosophy, the works of fiction, and the examples in real life, find no parallel to Christ. The poet must be greater

than his poem, a philosopher than his theory, the novelist than his hero. It takes more than a Jesus to invent a Jesus.

Christ was not born in the poet's fancy, or carved out of an ideal humanity, or developed out of a benevolent-sentiment. The character of Christ was not an invention, a fiction, but drawn from a living original.

His character was so remote from the ideas and anticipations of His times, so unfit to awaken sympathy, so unattractive to the heathen, so exasperating to the Jews, and so exposed to persecution and scorn, that it could not have been invented and assumed by an impostor. For a selfish, depraved, and designing mind to have formed the idea and purpose of a work of such beneficence, vastness, and moral grandeur would be to contradict all the laws of mind.

To conceive such a character, and assume it and act it out with no such precedent, and to be true to the ideal, to throw personality into it and wear it as a mask with the air of truth and reality so as to prevent detection, to carry out the drama under the shadow of the Cross, and in the death agony, and in all the minute and admirable conduct of Jesus, is a human impossibility. His character must have been real and original.

HIS CHARACTER WAS CONSISTENT.

Firm, without harshness; zealous, without fanaticism; gentle, without softness; forgiving, yet just;

true, yet progressive; dying for men, yet honoring the majesty of law. He knew the wickedness of men, yet He was not misanthropic. Men betrayed Him and despitefully treated Him and caused Him suffering, yet He manifested no ill-will. He was earnest without being fierce; calm without being dull. There was nothing of the ascetic about Him. He was not distant and morose, yet He was always devotional. He was not under the necessity of changing His mind. He had no apologies to make. Regrets and vain desires He had not. He made no pretense. He put on no airs. He did nothing for effect. He made no harangues about the grandeur of His office and character. He had no feeling of caste. He was the friend of sinners. He welcomed the poor as well as the rich. He was respectful to the great and considerate to the outcast. Children could take Him by the hand, and the homage of kings did not elate Him. He is not one-sided. There are no hills and valleys in His character,—extravagances and defects to mar it. He is "the voice of goodness, the psalm of God."

HIS CHARACTER WAS PERFECT.

His morality is the highest standard of conduct in all literature and law. His spirit has made music for the centuries. His actions have been under critical analysis for ages. For eighteen centuries the world has fixed its gaze upon this one person, and has found

no stain on His character, no flaw in His conduct, no shadow on His purity.

> "We had often wept
> Tears of delight to see celestial grace
> Struggling and triumphing in weakness; but
> Some stains had even with the saintliest saints
> Blotted the story of their lives; what need
> To speak of Noah and of Abraham,
> Of Moses, David, Hezekiah, Job,
> Who sometimes trailed their garments on the earth,
> Though whiter now than snow. But here was One
> In human weakness sinless.
> No stern recluse
> As His forerunner, but the guest and friend
> Of all who sought Him. Mingling with all life
> To breathe His holiness on all. No film
> Obscured His spotless lustre,"—"Without sin."

Sixty-two generations have passed away since Christ appeared, and He has not been reproduced. Reproduction is more likely than original invention. Yet He is the model of manhood, the climax of goodness and greatness. He is the one personality who has never fallen below His ideal. This has a Divine meaning. This awakens honest inquiry. If He is of the race, why is He not like the race? "The glories of heaven radiate around His spirit, and He tarries among us as one whose home is in the bosom of God." Hence we are led to inquire more specifically into His personality.

Take a few facts in His character and life,—histor-

ical facts,—and put them together, and tell me what you can do with them.

There was nothing in Christ's early life favorable to His future elevation. The family from which He sprang belonged to the lower ranks of society.

His home in Nazareth, His dependence upon His disciples and charity of friends are affecting evidences of His poverty. In addition to humble birth and poverty, it must be taken into account that almost the entire life of Christ was spent in manual labor. He not only lived with Joseph the carpenter, but actually wrought at the same trade. Mark says: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?"

Add to these facts of humble birth, poverty, and manual labor the lack of formal education. Some of His countrymen, when they heard His discourses, wondered at His wisdom, and said: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" Take another fact. The time spent in His ministry was only three short years, and He endured the opposition of the Jewish nation and the world, which resulted in His death of ignominy on the cross.

But notwithstanding all this, this poor artisan,—uneducated and despised by His countrymen, without army or civil power or wealth,—founded a religion that has outlived all philosophy, and is the conquering power of earth to-day. How do you account for this? Here is a problem scientific scepticism can't

solve, only on the ground that there was a divine nature in union with the human. His humanity can not be accounted for only on the ground of His divinity.

In addition to this argument of His humanity being unaccountable, except on the ground of His divinity, I raise another question, viz., AN EXPLANATION OF THE DEATH-POWER OF JESUS CHRIST. How is it that the death of Christ (a death of ignominy on the cross as a malefactor) has been an ever-widening circle of influence as the ages come and go? Death ends other men's work, and too often their influence, and their memory fades. History only memorializes a few. The millions are sunk into oblivion; but Christ's death gave birth to a moral and spiritual power that has belted the globe, and is the regnant principle in society, government, and civilization to-day.

If Christ is DEAD, why don't infidelity let Him alone? Can a dead man win conquests? Napoleon said: "Can you conceive of Cæsar as the eternal emperor of the Roman Senate, and from the depths of his mausoleum governing the empire and watching over the destinies of Rome?" But from Calvary there goes forth a living power, flying upon rapid wing, treading with royal step, diffusive as the light, refreshing as the rain, and scattering seeds of blessing everywhere, which take root and bloom in beauty, and yield an immortal harvest. Is Christ dead? Is the cross the end of His humble, despised, and per-

secuted life? If His humanity, so obscure, was unaccountable, what shall I say of His death on the cross, which has become the inspiration and hope of the millions since? The simple humanity and the death-power of Jesus Christ are mountain bowlders in the pathway of Unitarian theology.

Christ must be accounted for. You must explain this unique Humanity and this mysterious death. Do nothing in the world and nobody will care who you are and whence you came. If you do not introduce some new force in society or throw some new light on the path of life, there is nothing to be accounted for, and the world will not care who you are. But challenge the thinking of the times; put truth in new phases and aspects before the intellect of the age; startle the world by attacking its traditions and customs and prejudices, and then how soon people will begin to say, "Who are you? By what authority doest thou these things?" Pretenders may resort to this process; and this is the modern way for shallow characters to gain notoriety, and their only hope of popularity is singularity. But Christ was a true reformer. He became the problem of all time. Even to-day, while men reject His claims, they call Him back to ask Him further questions. Christ is not a matter of abstraction and metaphysics, but personality. Christianity is Christ. *He* must be accounted for, not Christianity. . . . .

There are various hypotheses as to Christ.

Various attempts have been made to explain the secret of His power and the mystery of His personality. I might name some of these in passing.

I.—THE MYTHICAL HYPOTHESIS.

It does not deny the historical existence of Christ, but admits Him to have been a religious genius and the founder of a religious system; yet it resolves all the supernatural and miraculous elements of Christ's person and history into myths. "A myth differs from a fable, which is a fictitious story based upon impossibilities, such as an inanimate object speaking and acting; also it differs from a parable, which is a fictitious narrative based upon possibilities, but not intrinsically truthful, and may illustrate a spiritual truth. A myth is unconsciously produced with simple faith in the actual occurrence of the story." Hence we are told that the mytho-poetical faculty invented the miracles and ascribed them to Jesus.

But we must bear in mind that our Lord did not live in fabulous, but historical times, in which Grecian culture and literature were widely diffused, and in which the Roman government had introduced settled laws and means of communication. The four Gospels are, on the very face of them, histories. They record what transpired before Pharisees and Sadducees; be-

fore Herod and Pilate; before Jews and Romans; friends and foes in Galilee, and Samaria, and Judea; making references to chronology, geography, archæology, and secular history as confirmations of their facts; and thus are as fully attested as histories as any other history in the world. Beside the very style and construction of the Gospels, the absence of any poetic art or traces of a fervid imagination, preclude the idea of myths.

II.—THE LEGENDARY HYPOTHESIS.

This differs from the mythical theory in that it admits in substance the historic books, and that Jesus spake and acted very much as stated in the narratives, but culls and collects from the four Gospels materials for a biography or legend of Christ, which it chooses to call the Fifth Gospel. But in doing this it gives us an inconsistent character, making Christ a sentimentalist, an enthusiast, a fanatic, an impostor, a wise rabbi, an unequaled saint, and an incarnate God. The Jesus of Renan is a moral monstrosity and an absurdity.

III.—HYPOTHESIS OF TENDENCY, OR THE TÜBINGEN THEORY,

(so called because taught by Dr. Baur, professor of Church History in Tübingen). This resolves the New Testament writings into "tendency books,"

written in the interest of contending parties of the Apostolic Age, and aims at a reconstruction of the History of Primitive Christianity on the basis of pantheistic intellectualism.

It assumes that Christ lived, taught, and died, but that no record of His history was thought of until after the second century. Then arose Gospels or memoirs, with the bias of the writer stamped upon them.

Hence, Christ becomes the simple expression of a human ideal, the incarnation of the Pantheistic God, who is forever evolved in consciousness. This theory makes Paul the real founder of the Christian system.

The mythical theory of Strauss, the legendary theory of Renan, the tendency theory of Baur, are all of them applications of the development theory of the explanation of the New Testament literature. It was supposed, until recently, that the earliest date to which we could trace New Testament literature was between 180 and 200 "Anno Domini." Hence, between 34, the date of the crucifixion, and 200, there was time for myths and legends to spring up, and for the disciples to weave about the idolized memory of their Lord those exaggerations which were mistaken for history.

The whole controversy concerning the origin of the canonical gospels and the date of the epistles has assumed a new phase in these days of historical

research. History comes to our rescue, and brings down the date of New Testament literature to 58. *How do we know this?* Take a few historic facts. Nero died in 68. When did Paul die? Under Nero. Hence he could not have died later than 68. When did Paul write his epistles? Before he died. Therefore before 68. Festus succeeded Felix in the government of Judea in 60. Paul was imprisoned in Cæsarea two years before Festus succeeded Felix, and he wrote these epistles when imprisoned. Hence we can bring the youngest of the epistles down to 58.

Now from 34 to 58, the space of twenty-four years, is not time for myths to grow up and be mistaken for history. Paul's testimony is contemporary evidence. New Testament literature touches the facts and has all the characteristics of historical verity. Myths and legends have too narrow a strip of time to grow upon.

IV.—THE UNITARIAN THEORY,

which admits the perfection of Christ's character and the truthfulness of the Gospel history, yet denies His Divinity.

It honors Christ "as the Son, representative and image of the Supreme God, but does not honor Him as God." The *Deity* of Christ it disowns. It goes so far as to admit that "in Christ's words we hear God speaking; in His miracles we behold God acting; in His character and life we see an unsullied

image of God's purity and love"—and yet He was not God. Dr. Joseph Parker says: "If God came into Christ as a separate and a human being, incarnated Himself in a creature precisely like myself, and standing on a level with myself, and left me out, and then speaks to me through the man He has thus made His own tabernacle, insults my reason, annoys my sense of justice, and savors of invidiousness which does not become an impartial God."

But take the Gospel method—Christ begotten of the Holy Ghost, conceived of the Virgin Mary, the Divine and human in one person—and it satisfies a want in the human mind, and I can adore the incarnate God. The Unitarian theory admits too much for its own conclusions, and is driven to the logical alternative of falling back upon an *infidel* or advancing to an *orthodox* Christology. Theodore Parker felt this and gave up the supernatural altogether, and Channing, under the love of Christ, was inclined to the other alternative, for he says: "I confess when I escape the deadening power of habit and receive the full import of such passages as these, 'Come unto Me and I will give you rest,' 'I am come to seek and save the lost,' etc., I am awed by the consciousness of greatness which those simple words express, and when I connect this greatness with Christ's miracles, I am compelled to exclaim with the Centurion,

'Truly this was the Son of God.'" - In his last address, delivered a short time before his death, he said: "The doctrine of the Word made flesh shows us God uniting Himself intimately with our nature, manifesting Himself in a human form, for the very end of making us partakers of His own perfection."

V.—THE ORTHODOX THEORY,

which claims that Christ was "very man and very God," yet one person. This theory can only account for the TWO NATURES, so generally ascribed to Him in the New Testament. This alone explains His Divine-human self-consciousness, which is the key to His personality and the golden thread running through all His words and deeds.

Christ was but one person. There is the absence of a twofold personality in Christ. He always says "I," "Me," "Mine." Yet He speaks and acts as MAN and speaks and acts as GOD. His claim to HUMANITY is not doubted. So then the question of His Personality is explained if we can show He had a Divine-human character and a Divine-human consciousness.

Can we sustain this proposition? I now raise this question. What did Christ claim for Himself? What is Christ's testimony concerning Himself? The Apostolic testimony has been considered. So I shall confine myself to His personal claim.

Take a few of HIS METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS. "I am the light of the world." Light takes no room, yet fills all space; warms the planets, yet does not crush a twig. "I am the door." Welcome, hospitality, home, warmth, honor, sonship, are all implied by the word door. "I am the bread of life." "I am the good shepherd." "I am the way." "I am the truth." "I am the life." How any being not conscious of supernatural and Divine power can talk this way I can not understand. If He is not Divine His ambition and presumption and egotism are beyond limit.

Add to these metaphorical expressions His utterances and acts which show He was CONSCIOUS OF MIRACULOUS POWER. He speaks to the winds and waves, "Be still," and there is a great calm; to the sick, "Be healed," and they are restored to health; to the dead son of the widow of Nain, "Arise," and he was given back to his mother alive; to Lazarus, who had been dead four days, "Come forth," and he arose. If Christ was not conscious of Divine power He must have been insane to have talked in this way. But more than this, He claimed DIVINE ATTRIBUTES. Such as Eternity—"Before Abraham was I am." "I am the first and the last." "Oh, Father, glorify Thou me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." Omnipotence—"All power is given unto me in heaven and earth."

"As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son of Man quickeneth whom He will." Omnipresence—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in their midst." "Lo, I am with you always." "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven." Omniscience—"No man knoweth who the Father is but the Son." He allowed Peter to say to Him, "Lord, Thou knoweth all things," and did not rebuke him for his error.

When I thus hear Him in His own words claiming Eternity, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, attributes which only Diety can possess, I must admit His Divine claim and Divine consciousness, or question His honesty and truthfulness.

But more than this, He accepted the TITLE AND WORSHIP OF GOD. Thomas called Him "My Lord and my God," and He did not rebuke Thomas for his blasphemy. Stephen called Him "Lord." Christ said Himself, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am." He was also WORSHIPPED AS GOD. "When God bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith, let all the angels of God worship Him." When He appeared to the eleven disciples in the mountain of Galilee after the resurrection, "They worshipped Him" (Matt. xxviii. 17).

Why let them be idolaters? Why lead them away from the worship of the one God? For He Himself said to Satan in the wilderness temptation, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." Why not say to these worshipping disciples, as Peter did to Cornelius, who cast himself at the feet of the disciple to worship, "Stand up; I myself am also a man."

Consider another fact. He FORGAVE SINS. He said unto the woman who came into the house of Simon the Pharisee, where He sat at meat, and knelt at His feet and washed them with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head: "Woman, thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." Also when the man sick of the palsy was brought to Him, He said: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The scribes said: "Why does this man speak blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God?" Jesus said: "That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, I say unto thee (the sick man) arise, take up thy bed and walk, and immediately he arose and went forth healed."

Consider also the PROPHECY and FACT OF HIS RESURRECTION. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it again." "I have power to lay down my life and power to take it up again."

In view of this prophecy, His enemies made sure of His death, and sealed and guarded His tomb.

Yet He who has the keys of death and hell, on the morning of the third day, unlocked the tomb and came forth, conqueror over the grave, with death and hell chained to His chariot wheels, and thus has given us proof of immortal life.

To all these facts of Divine consciousness; expressions and acts manifesting miraculous power; claims to Divine attributes; acceptance of Divine titles and worship; forgiving sins; the prophecy and fact of His own resurrection, add one more, viz.: THE PROMISE AND FACT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you." "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you." "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me." "He (that is, the Holy Ghost) shall testify of me." Now has Christ living witnesses? Was Pentecost a passing wonder? Was the Church a mere formal and human institution? Answer, ye millions of decided conversions. Answer, ye humble, consistent Christian lives. Answer, ye triumphant death-beds.

In addition to all this, we have Christ's direct personal claim to MESSIAHSHIP on several occasions, two of which I will name. He asked Peter: "Whom say *ye* that I am?" He had heard the world's opinion; that of the Church should be more direct. "Whom say *ye* that I am?" Peter said: "Thou art

the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said unto him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jo-na; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."

When before Cai-a-phas, the high-priest, he was placed upon oath, or at least a formula of adjuration was used, which in law was sufficient to constitute a regular oath: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?" St. Mark tells us Jesus answered: "I AM." The high-priest rent his clothes and said: "What need we of any further witnesses; ye have heard his blasphemy." Thus His enemies admit that He claimed Messiahship and Divinity, and thus they accused Him of blasphemy. This testimony and oath resulted in His death. He calmly and decidedly claimed a Divine consciousness as well as the human, as a faithful witness and in the face of death.

Now then, in view of this array of evidence—and it could be greatly increased and strengthened if time would permit—we can not question the fact that Christ possessed a Divine-human consciousness. He claimed a Divine as well as a human nature in the one person. His humility and holiness and sinlessness and purity of character can not stand if we deny His Divinity. If He is not Divine His ambition was beyond limit. He carried the sin of falsehood and blasphemy to a higher degree than any mortal. He

deluded millions of people, and made them idolaters. We can not avoid the strong conclusion of the author of "Ecce Deus": "If He is not God He is the devil."

The consistency of His life and character compel us to conclude that Christ was a Divine-human Saviour, in keeping with His own claims and the Divine-human consciousness which was manifested in His words and deeds.

It is not enough for us to have only a historic Christ, a theoretical Christ, a Divine-human Christ, a painted Christ. We are mocked by His figure; we are saved by His personality. His example may be perfect, claiming the admiration of the ages; His ethics may be the highest standard of conduct and the model for human action; His death may be influential and expiatory; His ashes not yet cold, and His cross His real throne of empire. Yet these must not be separated from His person. We can not worship an abstraction or love an ideal truth. A proposition can not win my affection, nor a problem comfort my life. I must have a person whom I can love and adore. I must have an incarnation, and not a theophany.

A theophany is impersonal, vague, and lacks durability. A Divine appearance or manifestation may pass away.

The invisible and incorporeal Deity I can not com-

prehend. The vastness of Deity oppresses me. The incarnation meets a want in the human mind.

The God-man is the central demand of my soul. Not the doctrines of Christ, or the example of Christ, or the death of Christ, valuable as these may be in their sphere, but the person of Christ.

Hence, He does not invite me to a study of His philosophy, but to *Himself*. "Come unto me and I will give you rest." He says, "Believe in me,"—not in my philosophy or something about me or concerning me, but "Believe in ME and thou shalt be saved."

Christ is greater than any definition—no formulæ or creed can express His Personality. Christ can not be separated from Christianity, making it a system of philosophy. . . . . You can gain an idea of the philosophy of Aristotle without any knowledge of his person and character.

You may separate Aristotle from his philosophy and it will not suffer any loss—will be none the less true and effective. Not so with the doctrines of Christianity; they run into and end with Christ. If you speak of the doctrine of sin, it was that dark fact that brought Him into the world and to the cross; of atonement, He is its sacrifice; of Christian faith, He is its object; of justification, He is the ground of it; of sanctification, He is the pattern and source of it; of the resurrection, He is its pledge; of the judgment, He is the appointed Judge; and of heaven, He is its

central glory. . . . . Even His gifts and blessings of peace and joy and hope will not suffice. We must have the Giver.

> "Thy gifts, alas! can not suffice
> Unless Thyself be given!
> Thy presence makes my paradise,
> And where Thou art is Heaven."

I call you to-night to this living personal Christ. Will you exchange Him for some other master? Will you prefer other fellowship? Then you will find your inner life barren. The sun will bring you no morning, and the promises of life will have no answer. To whom can you tell your sin? To whom offer your prayers? When you stand in absolute solitude, deprived of human help and not an angel-watcher about you, how will you pass the valley of shadows without this blessed Christ?

Welcome Him to your heart and life. His presence will never cast a gloom over your soul, or be a burden to your life, or dash one cup of real pleasure from your hand. He will never leave a human heart because He is tired of it, or because He has expended too much love upon it. Yet He can be entreated to go, scourged away, banished. May the blessed Christ become your personal Saviour, and a *vital union be formed between you and Him as imperishable as His love.*

In conclusion, we have *hope* in Him, and look for-

ward in full assurance of faith to the fulfilling of the glowing prophecy, "And on His head were many crowns."

See the grand procession gathering to the coronation! Astronomy, whose guiding star led the Eastern magi to Bethlehem manger to worship the newborn King, now draws nigh to crown Him, saying, "The heavens are the work of Thy hand; the moon and stars Thou hast ordained."

Geology at first startled the faith of the saints, but such men as Hugh Miller, Buckland, and Dana, have found the truth of God carved on the rocks, and now Geology draws nigh to crown Him, saying, "Of old didst Thou lay the foundations of the earth; the strength of the hills is also Thine."

Art comes with her tributes. Painting furnishes the "Last Supper," "The Transfiguration," "The Ascension," and the "Light of the World." Sculpture crowns her pedestal with Thorwaldsen's Christ, or fills her niches with apostles. Architecture, with Norman arches and Corinthian capitals, lifts its massive structures, and points its spires in honor of the risen, living Lord. Science becomes His handmaid, and literature a priestess at His altars.

Poetry, with its gems; and music, with its songs, proclaim Him King of saints. The rich, with their gifts like precious spikenard, and the poor, with their hearts' oblation, worship at His feet. "And after

this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne and the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our Lord which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

IV.

THE ETHICS OF CHRIST—DUTY, LOYALTY TO JESUS.

REV. J. G. MERRILL.

"Why askest Thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good. . . . . Come; follow me."—MATTHEW xix. 17–21.

IV.

THE ETHICS OF CHRIST—DUTY, LOYALTY TO JESUS.

THE subject upon which I am to address you is the ethical argument for our blessed religion from the nature of the doctrine of Jesus.

As an expression of the truths involved in my theme, I have chosen the words of my text, which, as found in the Revision, contain a question, covering the whole matter involved, "Why askest thou me concerning that which is good?" a statement, implying all that can be said upon our theme, "One there is who is good," and a command, which, rightly interpreted, expresses the conception which Jesus had of the whole duty of man; a command of two words, "Follow me."

And these words warrant the statement that I would make and which I would try to maintain, that duty in its last analysis is loyalty to Jesus Christ. This it seems to me is the loftiest ethics which the human heart can conceive of, and as such affords an impregnable argument for the verity of our religion.

It may be well to pause a moment to consider the

circumstances which surround our text. An impetuous young man, attractive in appearance, of good rank in society, exemplary in behavior, seized with a desire to question Jesus, concerning the meaning and mystery of life, thrusts himself into the presence of the Master with the question, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" This question at first blush appears eminently proper, but it was evidently very objectionable to Him, who reads the human heart and knows the logical result of human thinking.

It is not to the point to consider all that our Lord was displeased with in this question, nor all the reproofs implied in His reply. It is sufficient to observe that He called out from the young man an expression of fealty to the high ethical code given upon Sinai, and secured also from him the gratifying statement that his life had been shaped by that law.

But this was not enough. The young man would do something more heroic than obedience to the moral law implies. Jesus takes him on his own ground and adds a high requisition, which He evidently saw would cut to the depths the latent evil in the heart of His inquirer, assuring him that if this could be met his coveted aim would be gained, and then He adds the two words, which, as I have before said, sum up all, "Follow me."

But before entering into an analysis of this divine

code, I would ask you to review briefly the different elements involved in the term ethics.

The varied schemes which have hitherto held sway in men's thinking are five in number, and can be traced to the leading faculties of the mind.

The first and lowest, but perhaps most common, is grounded upon the sensibilities. To be happy is the highest good. The love of pleasure is the controlling emotion. This may express itself in the old maxim, "Live while you live," or the other, "Eat, drink, for to-morrow we die"; or it may rise higher and adopt the code of Aristotle, that moderation is the great virtue; or higher still, the doctrine of Paley, who made future eternal happiness the highest good,—one and all unworthy as an ultimate in morals, for the human mind can only be satisfied as happiness is made an incident, not an end.

There are, as you know, stars so distant that He alone can see them who looks indirectly at the point in the heavens where they are to be found; to look directly is to gaze at a blank space. In some such way happiness eludes those who go directly toward it; is found by those who are looking higher.

A second form of ethics is called utilitarianism. It has its home in that faculty of the mind which some philosophers call the understanding. He is the most profound man in ethics of this class who is the most shrewd in the calculation of chances. The mistake

which underlies such a philosophy can be seen in the fact that, as has been said, if ability is goodness then the locomotive is a very holy machine, and an Elgin watch is a very saintly production. This is the shallow and perverse ethics of much of the so-called scientific thinking of the age. Its fruitage is moral death.

A third form of ethics is based upon the exercise of that faculty of the mind by which we do our abstract thinking. Philosophers differ in the names they give this glorious endowment. I have perhaps designated it sufficiently. This is an exalted sphere in which to move. They who dwell in it live above the storms of life on a pacific sea. It is a transcendental life. But that it does not necessarily touch our ethical being, can be seen in the fact that by it wisdom is virtue and the philosopher is the saint. Such a philosophy has its sphere as a means ; to make it an end is to call dreaming the highest type of living.

A fourth form of ethics may be called the ethics of conscience. Duty is everything. To do that which is right is the highest aim under this code. It seems almost sacrilegious to say aught against such a lofty aim in life, and no one should dare say aught which would lessen fealty to conscience or devotion to duty; it is only when duty usurps the place of that which is above it that we should dethrone it.

The thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, with its unrivalled rhetoric, makes most strongly the case

against the supremacy of duty. "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

How possible it is to fail of securing the best when conscience and duty are made ultimate, can be seen in the fact that men pay debts, tell the truth, pray, preach, die, because their intellects tell them that it is right to do these things, and all the while they do not want to do as they do.

The spring of such an action is not the central, and, hence, controlling force of being. The distinction between the man of duty and the man who is under the genuine ethics, which we shall soon see Jesus maintained, is made perhaps in that passage in the Romans where Paul says: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die." The righteous man and the good man are very different men. The good man will be righteous, will do his duty, but the righteous man is not necessarily good. And nothing is more fearful than the man who is determined to do his duty, when, for any reason, he has come to mistake his duty. Paul starting out for Damascus, the men who employed the horrors of the Inquisition, modern saints whose tongues were sharper and words more cruel than the Inquisition, did their duty.

Conscience and duty are magnificent servants, but woe may betide when they become supreme.

We have only one activity of the human life remaining to which we may look as the residence of our ethical being—the will, viewed as the personality, of which Kant writes: "There is nothing in the world which can be termed absolutely and altogether good, a good will excepted." "A good will," he says, "is good in itself."

We are now at the centre of things. We have before us the faculty that controls our entire being, the centre of gravity, if I may so term it, of the microcosm, man. And it is this centre of things, this citadel, which Jesus approaches and demands a surrender, thereby making duty loyalty to Himself.

The "doctrine of Christ" begins, then, with obedience to the command of the text, the command repeated so frequently by our Lord when on earth: "Follow me."

And just here lies the argument for the verity of our religion. That religion is an absolute, an unique one, which, with reason, makes loyalty to its leader the first prerequisite in the character of its adherents. No religion could reasonably make such a demand were its leader any other than divine. That a being, having the character of our Lord, should make this demand, is His constant testimony to His divinity.

But let us not anticipate, leaving as statements these positions just uttered, which, if proved true, would make a chain that can not be broken; I will

consider some facts underlying ethics, which will perhaps make it unnecessary to prove either of the statements.

First. The ethics of Jesus recognizes the fact that there is such a thing as natural morality, or, in other words, that man has, by reason of his being man, the power to distinguish between right and wrong, and the ability to choose the right.

I know that not a few theologians would protest against such an acknowledgment as this, on the ground that, in their estimation, it paid too great honor to human nature at the expense of grace. But the statement of John concerning our Lord, "There was the true light, which lighteth every man coming into the world," or, as the marginal reading of the Revision has it, "every man as he cometh into the world," is enough to establish the fact that the Bible regards a moral nature and a natural ability to do right, man's birthright. Christ created man, not merely our hands, feet, eyes, ears, and brain, but our moral nature; and he does Christ no honor who declares that the light by which He lights every man coming into the world is not worth the having; he does our Lord greater honor who recognizes as a gift of Christ every vision of moral goodness which thrills the heart of man, be he heathen or Christian. For I hold that when John maintains that all things were made by Christ, and without Him was nothing made that was

made, he is a witness to the fact that every man who has a sense of the contrast between honesty and dishonesty, justice and injustice, has received it from the eternal Word of God, the Christ. And in this aspect of the case it is an honor to my Master when I trace teachings that commend themselves to minds enlightened by the more full revelation of our Lord from the Greek mind of Socrates, Plato, and an Epictetus, from the Roman Marcus Antonius and Seneca, or from the sages of India and China.

Understand me! The only point I am insisting upon and the only one necessary for my argument, is the existence of natural morality. All that I have said concerning its being a gift from Christ is an expression merely of the Biblical view of the way men came in possession of it, introduced not so much to meet the objections of those who would be disposed to deny the claims of revealed religion, as to disclose the mistake of those who claim too much for revealed religion, and thus, if possible, convince those who have assumed the attitude of sceptics, that they need no longer be scandalized by the view, that man has no moral nature, in the real sense of that term. And this will be seen further in a consideration of the other factor of my statement, viz.: that man has the ability to choose the right, without which I hold that any endowment, however rich, could hardly be called a moral nature. To this truth Paul is a witness in

the famous passage of the first of Romans, where he says: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God manifested it unto them . . . . that they may be without excuse, because that, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God." Also, our Lord testifies to the same fact when He says, "and this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light."

It seems strange that any argument is needed to prove that there can be no ethical philosophy which has relation to beings who can not in any sense of the term choose the right and refuse the wrong. And, perhaps, much, if not all the difficulty in this direction, could have been avoided had the fact always been borne clearly in mind that there is a world-wide distinction between saying that every human being can choose the right, and does choose it, and by remembering that the philosophy which maintains unequivocally that every human being can be good does not need to hold that there is a single human being who is or has been absolutely good; and this leads me to another item in the ethics of our Lord. I remark:

Secondly. The ethical teaching of our Lord recognizes the fact that sin is universal. "All theories of ethics fail which do not recognize the fact that man himself is a failure."

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Our Lord gives, indeed, no warrant for the extreme views which men have held who have declared man's physical, mental, and moral nature totally vitiated. But none the less it is an essential factor of His ethics that as Paul has written, "There is no distinction, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

Quarrel with the fact as we may, Jesus Christ always went on the basis that the world needed a Saviour, for the reason that it had sinned. His expressions concerning Himself as a physician of souls, concerning the new life, man's being lost, the dangers of the future world, are unintelligible on any other basis than that the men who were to have Him as a teacher in ethics, must first of all know that they have sinned. And it is in view of this fact, the universal sinfulness of man, that I am led to remark that the ethical teachings of Jesus are strong, where all others break down.

Take the five possible theories which I have already mentioned. Hedonism, or that which makes pleasure its end. This might answer for a holy being, whose pleasures would be necessarily in the right direction. It can not answer for a sinful being who pleases to do wrong. Utilitarianism: this can never rise to the sphere of absolute right, and no system of ethics is worthy of the name which can not reach into the sphere of the absolute, and save as the one who judges in the case is absolutely wise and good. It must con-

stantly be a failure, when sin is giving the mind a wrong bias. Transcendentalism: nothing can be a more unsafe guide for one who has sinned; it is like a man looking at the stars when attempting to walk across a bog. Conscientiousness, as we have seen, is ever a false guide, when sin has done the work for the soul, which has been done for the mariner, who has come to trust a needle that can not be trusted to point north. Determinativeness, or the ethics of which the will is the centre, fails in the same place, for no man by nature has a good will, nor can he by nature tell how to make it good.

But where all these are weak, the ethical principle of Jesus is strong, and He introduces a power supplementary to truth and the highest human ethics, for a new heart is given.

An incident in the early part of our Lord's ministry brings out this truth: the conversation with Nicodemus. This thoughtful inquirer was amazed, well-nigh stunned with the announcement, "Except a man be born anew he can not see the kingdom of God."

A man, therefore, who is to adopt the ethics of Jesus as the guiding force of his life, must receive a gift from God equivalent to a new birth, must have gained a new life. This is the germ thought of the ethical teaching of Jesus, and we are now ready to see whereunto it will grow. I remark:

Thirdly. Faith or loyalty is in the ethics of Jesus

essential to righteousness. As our Lord remarked in the close of His recorded conversation with Nicodemus, saying, "Whosoever believeth on Him may have eternal life."

We have now crossed the threshold of the central truth of my discussion. We have closed the door behind us, and stand face to face with Him who says, "Follow me," or in other words, "Believe on me, or come unto me,"—different expressions signifying the same thing, Be loyal to me!

Men sometimes urge against Christianity the objection that it relies too greatly upon faith. On the same basis, fault should be found with a painter for being sensitive in the matter of colors, or a musician in the matter of sounds, or a trader for his honor. It is a *sine qua non* of the morality which Jesus urges, loyalty to Himself, faith.

I imagine that many men are troubled because they misapprehend the essence of faith; they think it is the believing something or the feeling something when it is the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the supreme and the fixed determination to entrust all to Him. An act which implies more or less of believing and feeling as may be the character of him who is to have faith.

The ethics of Christ then makes Him supreme. And the lines are drawn very sharply, for He says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not

worthy of me," and even more strongly does He put the truth, saying, "If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple." Could any stronger expressions be employed than these? Misunderstood, indeed, by those who imagine the word hate, here, signifies animosity, active hatred, rightly interpreted by those who hold that so great is love for Christ that in comparison with it all other love may be called hate, and in conflict with it all other love will be hate.

A love which finds a faint analogue in the devotion of a soldier to his country as he goes to death, leaving behind him aged parents, devoted wife, helpless babes, counting his own life nothing if he can but die for native land. A loyalty not often put to so severe a test; but when it is tried, rejoicing to face it. A loyalty that implies in him who demands it a divine character. A claim which either proves him who made it divine or insane. For nowhere between these two extremes can be found a being who would dare make such a demand upon a race.

The fact is that no human being is capable of assuming the place which Jesus thus took, without losing balance. As Neander wisely remarks: "Any one who endeavors to reach the ideal involuntarily confounds himself with his ideal, and this leads to self-

exaltation, to the deifying of human nature," and here is the sure precursor of failure. Humanity is dizzy upon such heights.

But all through the New Testament Jesus is upon this height, not only in His own estimation, but in that of His adherents. All human action is to revolve around Him. Are we bidden forgive? "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us." Should we endure suffering? "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example." Are we told to walk in love? "Christ also hath loved us and given Himself for us." Are we to be philanthropic? We should do it because the "Lord Jesus for our sakes became poor." Whatever we do, no higher motive is held out than "the love of Christ constraineth us."

It is in the light of this principle that we should read the issues of this life as they appear upon the picture that Jesus gives us of the judgment-day—on that day when men are to be ranked among the saved or among the lost, as they have shaped their lives upon earth by the underlying principle which Jesus laid down, or did not shape their lives by it.

They are, you remember, the sheep and the goats. And who are the sheep? Is it they who have lived for pleasure, or to make the most of life, or to soar above their fellows? Is it even those who have aimed to do their duty? No; listen: "Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye

blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me." The righteous in their astonishment ask Him when they had done all these things, and Jesus answers them: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." Me, Me, I, I—no words are oftener on the lips of Jesus than are these, and none others could oftener be upon the lips of Him, whose personality was the centre of His ethical philosophy.

And what life and warmth there is in such a philosophy! The ethics of Jesus is not an abstraction. We do not have before us an ideal, but a person. How different from the attempts of Plato as he tried to form the conception of a perfect man, just as he had tried to form a conception of a perfect republic. Whoever saw the man or the republic? They only exist in the mind of the philosopher, as unlike the personal Saviour as is the gleam of an iceberg unlike the glow of the sun.

But I must move forward. I have dwelt long enough, I imagine, upon the underlying principles of the ethics of Jesus. I pass to a

Fourth consideration, that, although Jesus estab-

lished no code or system of ethics, none the less does the principle which He enunciated reach all moral action.

There is in one of the most characteristic remarks of our Lord an arrangement of words that has sometimes been overlooked, but which, borne in mind, gives us the key to the whole situation before us. It is the familiar words: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me," not learn of me and take my yoke. It is first loyalty then learning, first obedience then knowledge, or using the expression, "follow me," the key-note of our discourse, the truth is expressed in the words, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness"; or expressed even more philosophically in the terms of the Revision in the 17th verse of the 7th chapter of John: "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching."

It is the first impulse of the human mind, to say that any system of ethics which should instruct men most freely in all the details of morals would thereby be the best. And there have been not a few who have said: "How I wish our Lord had told us whether it is right to keep Sunday as the Puritans did, or as the Germans do; whether total abstinence and prohibition are to be chosen, rather than moderate drinking and regulation of traffic in strong drink? Whether I can speculate on 'change or dance the german? What I shall do to get to church, when the

place I attend is further than I can walk? Can I with right have as well-furnished parlors and well-spread table as most of my station in society have? Is it right for me to visit the World's Fair when there are so many going hungry and who have no coal?" There is no end to the questions that might be asked, and which, in some of our moods, we sometimes think our Lord ought to have answered. But He did not. And when we think wisely, we are satisfied that it was the part of wisdom for our Lord to plant the life germ, which will produce the fruitage desired, rather than to collect the necessarily perishable results of growth.

Now, the force of this germ is seen in several directions.

First, it is in a sense self-acting. I mean by this that there is in its nature the potency which secures certainty of results.

It is the highest ambition of the inventive genius of our age to construct machines which shall of themselves carry out the design of the inventor, and prevent the workings of an inferior mind thwarting the results aimed at. It was several years ago that I stood watching a machine in the fifth story of the largest cotton-mill in the world. A young woman stood before it as it wound hundreds of spools of cotton. All at once it was silent. The machine was so constructed that the breaking of a single thread sep-

arated the power from the mechanism, and this simple device of a master mind was equal to the attention of twenty or thirty lesser minds, which might have been delegated to secure the same result. On the same principle the most important functions of our bodies are self-acting. God has held in His own hand the beating of our hearts, the respiration of the lungs, the movement of the digestive organs. He did not dare trust to us the citadels of life.

In some such way I have thought He regarded it necessary to secure an ethical force which should in a certain sense be self-active.

But, unlike the machine of which I have spoken, the self-activity of the Lord's ethics comes from the life-force which it has. In other words, when a man has begun to follow Christ, to be loyal to Him, there is a new impulse which has entered his soul, and which, as long as it abides there, must act in the direction of character-making.

A second characteristic of this force is that it tends to secure perfection. If it ever had full sway I could say more than this, that it secured perfection; and this is the case, because He whom we follow is perfect, and has afforded us through His grace the ability to walk in His footsteps. That Jesus Christ is perfect needs no proof in an age when infidels vie with Christians in paying honor to His name; in the day when a whole world not only echoes the saying

of Pilate, "I find no crime in the Man," but adores Him for the positive virtues which have made Him a unique character in history, with the strength of manhood and the tenderness of woman, with the simplicity of childhood and the wisdom of the sage, with self-renunciation without asceticism, with heroism free from any of the vices of the world's heroes; in a word, the ideal man living a real life.

We hear from the lips of those who look out into a large future the prophecies of the coming man, the development of the master forces, which are accumulating with our constantly widening civilization. But we are able to say that no distant future, with all the growth that it implies, can find a man to come who shall equal Him who has come; and what is more, that he who is to come will only secure the best things for himself as he walks in the footsteps of Him who has come.

And it was He who said to the world: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Perfect! There is no higher height! And yet the least can attain it no less than the greatest. A perfect animalcule is as perfect as a perfect leviathan.

But our Lord said more than this. It would have been cruel to have bade us, in our weakness and inherent waywardness, aspire to the perfection of which we are not capable, save as we are to have the help without which no such consummation is possible.

It is just here that we learn our possibilities. He bids us abide in Him,—as He tells us, to be branches of Him, the vine,—and thus gives us the life-force which flows through His moral being and can energize our life. As He allows to course through our veins the blood which has such complete oxygenization every time we draw our breath in Him, that it tears down one by one the evil disorders through our entire system.

Or, to use another of the many illustrations that He employed to present this truth, He is the light, the sun of righteousness, and so long as we walk in the light we are sons of light and are reflecting the glory of Him who, being perfect, delights to have us send back to heaven the rays He has bestowed. Not the dull coal, absorbing all, but the diamond of the same component parts, indeed, with the coal, sending heavenward all the beams of light that come from heaven. Not, indeed, that all or any of us are these perfect jewels, sending all the colors of the prism into the face of the sun; for, although all colors are wrapt up in Him, who is the Light, it is the province of each of us to send back an individual color, it may be, and thus the world is made beautiful by the variety of the hues which the shining of the One Sun produces. Were there no sun shining in our hearts, a moral night with the blackness of universal darkness would everywhere prevail; but no sooner

has the Sun of Righteousness arisen, with healing in its wings, than over the landscape comes indescribable beauty.

Last summer, with a companion, I climbed in the darkness over the untried pathway that leads to the summit of Pilot Knob, overlooking the beautiful Arcadian valley. We felt our way among the rocks and stumbled among the débris that dynamite and powder had thrown up, until at last, waiting for the coming of day, we looked out upon the sombre scene, with its few outlines made visible by the approach of dawn.

At the appointed moment, with irresistible might, the chariot of the god of day came over the distant hills that skirted the horizon, and from out the broad sweep of the dull, dark plains there came the green of the pasture land and the yellow of the golden grain, the dark brown of the hillsides at a distance, the silver gleam of the little brooklet, the faint blue of the farther hills seen in perspective, the more intense blue of the sky—and whence came all this beauty but from the Lord of Day, who, looking in the face of nature, called out the loyal smile of a morning greeting—some such a smile as human hearts can give when Jesus sheds abroad the light of heaven upon the soul?

But there is a third factor in this ethical germ which we must not fail to notice; it is ubiquitous in

its workings. Here as elsewhere it possesses the characteristics of Deity. Its influence is omniscient and omnipresent. We can say with the Psalmist: "Whither shall I go from the Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?—if I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me."

The duty to follow Jesus, loyalty to Him and the life which this implies, touches the tenderest child and the man of fourscore, the highest executive of the mightiest republic and the boy who sweeps the streets, the railroad king and the tramp, the scientist and the simple-minded girl, the prima-donna and the beggar, saint and sinner, demon and angel, Michael and Lucifer, the archangel and Satan. Wherever in the realm of moral being there is intellect, conscience, and will, the personality of Jesus Christ is a factor which presents itself to quicken thought, enlighten conscience, and guide the will.

Have you ever tried to trace the movements of this divine force in the life of the age which was upon the earth during the three years that He walked among men? There was no letter of the existing divine laws which He did not fulfil. The ten tables

of Moses He made most glorious. His life was felt at the wedding, and its joys were made more complete; at the grave, and its griefs were made less; in the temple, where worship was hollow; at the toll-gate of the tax-gatherer; with Pharisee, Sadducee, and zealot; with jurist and harlot; with old men and babes; with criminals and judges; in the fisher's boat and in the hall of the learned scribe.

And the same life has its power in a much higher degree to-day. No man can follow Christ and sell a short yard or under-weight, forge a check or take usury.

There is no inspiration in loyalty to Christ for the unkind word, the harsh judgment, the scornful lip.

He who looks to Jesus will speak purer words, think purer thoughts, and his deeds will be pure.

To know that His eyes are upon us suggests kindliness to the poor, tenderness to the feeble, gentleness to the sensitive, sweetness and light everywhere.

Soldiers have faced the cannon in His name. Judges have dared public opinion as they executed unpopular law in His name; friends have been true to those who were in disgrace, and shared their shame for His sake. No heroism can surpass the magnificent devotion that His eye enkindles.

He went about doing good, and they who followed Jesus are found in the alleys and the homes of the abject; in the prison cell and among the savage nations of the earth; not driven thither by duty, but

because ever is the form of the Blessed One going on before.

But there is a fourth, a final factor in this ethical germ which surpasses all that I have mentioned. It is its personal or life force. I have, from the very necessities of the case, hinted at this element before, but true logic demands at this time a separate statement of this essential thought.

And nowhere in our Master's life do we find this truth expressed with such force as when He hung upon the cross.

Our Lord's disciples were scandalized at the prophecy which He made concerning Himself. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." And all through the history of the Church those who have failed to appreciate the thought that duty in its last analysis is loyalty to Jesus, have been scandalized by the cross. Other teachers of moral philosophy have seated themselves in the halls of the academy, the college, the university, have adorned the chair of the professor; others have written learned books and astonished their fellow-mortals with their erudition; but it was the cruel cross and the untold agonies of Calvary which our Lord chose when He would draw a race to a perception of their highest duty. In those few but awful hours, mankind received an impulse toward true living that surpasses all the teachings of all the sages in all the ages.

When on the tree, our Lord bowed His head and cried, "It is finished!" a universe could feel that nothing further could be said or done to make righteousness more glorious, or wickedness more outrageous. The book which should contain all possible incentives to right action there had its finis.

Just in proportion to our conception of the worth of Him, who on that awful Friday hung between heaven and earth, until His heart broke and He died, will be the might of the lesson that He taught when after a life marked by the constant demand, "Follow me," He lifted up and drew all men unto Himself.

Other men have been lifted up, have died in greater physical torture than He, but their death has failed to lift humanity above itself. "A stream can not rise higher than its fountain." Jesus Christ makes His cross the uplifting force in the moral universe because He is higher than man, higher than angel, was God manifest in the human form.

Is it any wonder, then, that during all the 180 decades since the universe learned the supreme lesson taught upon the cross, the most beautiful and most complete lives that have been lived have been of those who have most closely followed Jesus Christ?

I looked into a casket where was resting the form of one who had gone to glory, but as the soul departed it left an impress of itself upon the face of her who was sleeping her last sleep, and it seemed to

me that I saw the face of an angel. By nature and the use of the ordinary forces that shape character, my friend received nothing more than strength and ruggedness; but grace, that inimitable artist, had drawn its lines, and out of the rough marble had chiseled the face of a seraph. It is not always or often that the glory of the work done in the soul is so fully stamped upon the countenance. But, as I turned to look again upon the face of the sleeping saint, I said in devout thanksgiving, such is the life begotten by loyalty to Jesus Christ; but one of ten thousand times ten thousand who have found their highest duty in the words of Him who said, Follow me; of Him who, in that He has so transformed humanity, by the very superhuman force which such a work implies, affords the strongest proof of His divinity.

I am done. The journey I have taken has not been long, but it may be well as we part company to obtain from the height we have reached a bird's-eye view of the road we have gone over. We started out, after an announcement of the end we aimed at, with a brief presentation of the different schemes of ethics which the world has had. Then I attempted to show, first, that Jesus founded His ethics upon the basis that humanity is by nature capable of morality; second, that sin has robbed us of the moral ability which God gave us to be good; third, that loyalty to Christ Himself was in the mind of our Lord, the

only hope for righteousness on the part of a race ruined by sin.

I proceeded then to characterize this loyal love for Jesus, saying that, as a germ force in morals, it was self-acting; it tends to perfection; it is universal, and above all contains in itself a personal life-force,—Jesus Christ upon the cross lifting humanity above itself. I had just come to an exhibition of the work which this ethical germ had done in the world, and was lingering beside the casket of one who in her death had disclosed the might of Him who had been her master, when I forbore other illustrations which crowded before me, as it is the province of my brother to whom is assigned the next topic in this series of lectures to recount the triumphs of the truths which Jesus taught. But if you will pardon me, I do want you to tarry for a moment with me as we turn to look upon our Lord.

Listen! Down through the ages comes a voice, gentle, sweet, and clear; it is the voice of a plain man in a peasant's garb. A man who talks in monosyllables, who tells simple stories, who does indeed cure the desperately sick, and some of those who saw Him said He raised the dead; but to most who knew him, He was a plain carpenter's son, despised by the aristocracy, hated by the devout, put to death by those in authority. And what does He say? Two words tell the whole. "Follow me." "Follow me."

A very few plain and uninfluential men heard Him and obeyed. They shaped their lives by their new resolve. They taught others the same supreme rule of life.

Listen! Where is that voice? Is it from humble Nazareth, or ever proud Jerusalem? Is it the voice of a humble carpenter, a wonder-worker in a rude age? No. It comes from beyond the skies, and I see the Son of Man clothed with a garment down to the feet, in His right hand seven stars, and His countenance as the sun shining in his strength. "And I hear the voice of many angels, saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, honor, glory, and blessing. And after this I saw a great multitude, which no man can number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb; and the Lamb which is before the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of the water of life." Listen, the two voices are one! And now it is again from earth: "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep. And when He hath put forth all His own, He goeth before them and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice." Spoken on earth, spoken from heaven. A voice which obeyed compasses the whole duty of man. "Follow me."

V.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE INFLUENCE OF JESUS IN HISTORY.

M. RHODES, D.D.

"Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them."—MATT. xi. 2–5.

"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him."—JOHN x. 37, 38.

V.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE INFLUENCE OF JESUS IN HISTORY.

FOR more than eighteen hundred years a religion has existed in the world called Christianity. Its founder was Jesus Christ, a man unique alike in His origin and character, without any parallel before and with no repetition since. The spirit and principles of this singular faith are as attractive in their excellence as they are masterly in their power; and while only what might be expected, it is not without significance that they have so successfully challenged the admiration and respect of the most thoughtful minds and the best manhood of the centuries. It is only in accordance with the fitness of things that such a religion should have made for itself a history, and that this history should be of such a character as to furnish some substantial test of the claims it makes.

I do not affirm that Christianity is dependent alone upon the facts of history for testimony to its divine origin, nor is it needful to say that this is the strongest argument. It is in the line of external evidence, and whilst, as we think, unanswerable, except upon

the assumption of a divine origin for Christianity, it is eminently proper to demand such testimony, and essential to the character and purpose of the Christian faith that it be produced.

The grounds of the defence of Christianity as a distinct purpose and revelation of God, as has been shown with unquestioned candor and ability by the brethren who have preceded me, are as multiform as its excellence is varied. Complete in itself as the sun, every feature of it, like every ray of light, leads back to the original source.

It is, however, a reasonable demand that along with any system that challenges the faith of men and looks to the moral elevation of the race, Christianity should certify, in some way available to all, to the claims it makes. No system can claim to be a religion or to authoritatively demand the faith of men unless, along with its dogma, it produce a life. It must achieve in its subjects what it claims in its origin, illustrates in its spirit, and consummates in its purpose.

As Mr. Coleridge says: "A religion, that is a true religion, must consist of ideas and facts both; not of ideas alone, without facts, for then it would be mere philosophy; not of facts alone without ideas, of which those facts are the symbols, or out of which they arise, or upon which they are grounded, for then it would be mere history."

In Christianity this fundamental conjunction is manifest, and has been sustained from the beginning. With a basis of truth as unimpeachable as it is profound, Christianity is not wanting in facts; they blaze in her course and flash through the centuries like the stars that illumine the firmament. The field is rich, many have set out to find treasure in it, some to confirm, others to destroy; but with whatever spirit, it is not without significance that Christianity has survived the reproaches of its friends and the slander of its foes, and like the sun, now obscured by clouds, and now shining in his strength, it is no less pretentious to-day than at first, and more masterful than ever.

I stand in awe both of the character and scope of the facts which come to make contribution to my purpose, as I attempt to weave them for a crown about His brow, who, to all of us, is a common Lord and Saviour. An attempt which in the nature of the case must be feeble, in view of the vastness of the subject on the one hand, and of my own limitation on the other.

This faith, be it remembered, began with the avowed purpose of proving its pretentious origin by the achievement of its equally pretentious purpose. "I bear witness of myself," said its matchless Author. The history of Christianity is not an accident, to be accounted for by a series of fortunate or adverse circumstances; it is a fact, an inevitable result from ade-

quate causes, both of which are subjects of its own inspired revelation. As the miracles especially confirmed the faith of the first disciples, so this history now, is for us and for all the world the unanswerable witness to His claims who declared Himself the Sent of God and equal with Him. As no man can deny the divine existence without quenching the stars, so we contend no man can fairly deny Christianity without blotting out its history.

But the facts are here, just as real and more forcible as testimony, than those which constitute the narrative of any event in the nation's life; they are inwoven with the spirit and civilization of the time, and they are of such character and force as to leave us without any satisfactory explanation of their origin, save in our consent to the inspired revelation that this religion is from God. As some one has said: "If Christianity be not of God, then is it historically and structurally a series of marvels unique in the world's history; a miracle greater than its assumed supernaturalism itself."

We can not fairly estimate nor comprehend this world's history apart from Christianity, for despite the world's resistance, this superhuman faith has thrust its roots into all of the most effective elements and methods of our progress. It has been as imperial in its spirit as it has been benign in its influence, and everywhere in its march it has combined a majesty

of gentleness with an unselfish sovereignty, which at once discloses the divine might and excellence of its Founder.

We cheerfully consent that if Christianity be what is claimed for it, then, no matter where, no matter by what forces resisted, it must illustrate this irresistible aggressiveness, and thus constantly assert its supreme origin. It can not do otherwise than produce a history in consonance with its exclusive and sovereign character. It is its own maxim, and of special application in its own case, that "a good tree can not bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."

If, therefore, it be required of us that we sustain the claims of the Christian faith on rational grounds, may we not now with equal force demand of the unbeliever that he furnish a rational solution of the problem of its masterly history?

We hold that this demand may be made at the beginning without any presumption, because this history of which we are to speak has not been equalled by any other force or system, though operated with every apparent advantage, and is acknowledged by not a few who are not personally partial to the Christian religion to be identical with the noblest and most permanent progress of mankind.

If it be said that the best effects of Christianity can be produced under like circumstances by other

agencies wholly human, our answer is, let them be produced, the world waits for such a record. Surely there has been time enough and no end of efforts to produce something that would present to the world a counterpart of Christianity sufficiently complete to gainsay the coronation it has given to the man of Nazareth, and so, if possible, displace it, but like its Founder it is still matchless in its character, and without a rival in the number and excellence of its benedictions.

Of course, it is not claimed that everything that has wrought well for the world's good is wholly due to Christianity; other forces and systems have done good along with it and because of it; but while it belongs to our great faith heartily to accord "honor to whom honor is due," it is insisted that Christianity in all best progress is manifestly the essential and dominant force. The verdict of the ages is that other forces have their value and place, but as well, that alone, the very best of them are powerless to create and develop those institutions and that manhood, which are essential to the strength and beauty of a lasting Christian civilization.

It is a fact which we think will be difficult to deny that the ideas and spirit which enter in and attain to supremacy in all best progress, are the same ideas and spirit which are inculcated by the Christian Scriptures, and it is only within the bounds of Christen-

dom that these obtain in the thought and habit of men.

Neither commerce, nor culture, nor any other of the world's methods of civilization alone have ever proven themselves sufficient to redeem a nation. Believers in Christianity have often stood in the way of progress, and by blunder, hypocrisy, and bigotry have sometimes set this sublime faith before the world in the unseemly garb of mockery.

We must be careful, however, to distinguish between the human community called the church and Christianity. The one is from God for men, the other has often shown itself to be of men and very like them. Frankly, and rather as we think to the help than to the hurt of our argument, do we admit that if Christianity were to be judged by much that has been taught and done in its name, we should be compelled to attribute its authorship to the "prince of the power of the air," rather than to the "Prince of Peace." Christianity has had its Papal inquisitions and its Protestant persecutions, and in nothing did they achieve better than in showing what Christianity is not. Men have perverted the sunlight, the sublimest things God has made have been plucked from their places and made to flash as tempting jewels on gates that opened to the darkness of the pit, but these good things are not to be despised because sometimes found in doubtful company.

A diamond is none the less beautiful and valuable because it sparkles on the finger of an assassin or libertine. Bad men, mistaken, prejudiced men, have and still sometimes hold up the broad, bright shield of the Christian faith before them while they pervert its truth, violate its spirit, and buffet His cheek whose dying compassion for His enemies, mingled with and transfigured His bitterest agony into a prayer of mercy. From the great globe-heart of Christianity not a single wrong that has ever been perpetrated in its name gets anything but rebuke. It is unfair to take any unsightly caricature, the product of man's imperfect and tottering character, as any test of the original. This is not the history of Christianity any more than license is the history of liberty or lust the expression of love.

Abuse has retarded its progress and impaired the influence of its methods sometimes, but its own living, loving heart has remained invulnerable to any reproach, and like a mountain stream finding its way to the sea, it has swept across the most sterile parts of the earth and made them to bloom as a garden. When men have looked at the immature and imperfect representatives of Christianity for the express image of its Author, they have looked for too much; as well judge of the scholarship of a famed teacher by the attainments of a sluggish pupil after a year's training; but when men have looked at Jesus they

have been encouraged, and have discovered themselves being changed into the same image from glory to glory. Here is the unanswerable and ever-hopeful advantage of Christianity—it presents a perfect ideal, and by the influence and fruit of this it asks to be judged. Mr. Leckey, in his "History of Rationalism," says: "There is, indeed, nothing more wonderful in the human race than the way in which this ideal has traversed the lapse of ages, acquiring a new strength and beauty with each advance of civilization, and infusing its beneficent influences into every sphere of thought and action" (Vol. I., p. 336).

That Christianity, despite so serious an embarrassment as the misapprehension and reproach of its professed friends, should have made its way down the ages, and should now be able to challenge the world with a history brilliant as an apocalypse, is no mean proof of the astonishing claims it makes. Were this religion of man, the infirmities and faults of men would have caused it to contribute to the failures of men long ago. We shall not condemn the soil because the tares grow where the golden grain waves to the breeze, nor will we conclude that Christianity is not of God because imperfect men have scarified it with their unholy touch; the less, since indisputably many of these have been recovered by its own transforming power, have lived to minister at its altars, and now either adorn its doctrine with holy

lives, or, resplendent in its image, look into His face and lay their crowns at His feet, who gave it to the world.

But Christianity has had other and still more formidable difficulties to overcome than the one to which I have just alluded. It has had no favored way skirt with flowers and cheery with light and singing birds. Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, when He who proclaimed Himself the light of the world, burst with the lustre of a thousand suns, upon its gloom.

The significance of the victories of the cross consists not simply in their lofty character, but in the fact of their achievement over a resistance, unsurpassed for the ingenuity of its methods, the heat of its spirit, and the persistence of its purpose. There is nothing in the history of the past to warrant us in believing that any system of faith, only human in its origin, could have successfully withstood such a tide of opposition. The disparity between the instruments chosen to commend and propagate the new faith, and the forces that set against it like a flood, made them to appear contemptible in the eyes of the world, and but for the fact that the pulse and purpose of the mighty movement were divine, the undertaking would have been as rash as it must have proven hopeless. But these humble men, without name or learning, but with hearts fired with a holy love and brows

"mitred with Pentecostal flame," braved the venture, and conquered in the name of the Crucified.

Look a little farther at the evil forces that had to be mastered before Christianity could attain to conquest. It is a strange medley history gives us of the world, when the imperial throne on the Tiber ruled its destinies. What a strange mingling there was of forces, noble and degraded; and how the blush for our kind overtakes us and the rushing blood kindles indignation, as we view the shameful prostitution of gifts in every relation, which our holy faith has come to regenerate and restore to their proper functions and beauty!

It is not permitted to me to uncover in this presence the depth of that depravity, nor can I give you to realize the hostility of that pagan dominion upon whose inflamed flood-tide Christianity broke as with the voice of God. A heathen philosopher but skirts the edge of that foul sea when he says: "All things are full of crimes and vices. More is perpetrated than can be removed by force. There is a struggle to see which will excel in iniquity. Daily the appetite for sin increases, the sense of shame diminishes. Casting away all respect for right and justice, lust hurries whithersoever it will. Crimes are no longer secret; they stalk before the eyes of men. Iniquity has so free a course in public, it so dominates in all hearts, that innocence is not only rare, it does not exist at all."

So wrote Seneca. There was no relation of life, no function of government, no flourish of society, that was not overlaid with revolting corruption; the very temples of worship were suggestive when not occasions of lust. The rivalries of the great and influential, and often of the cultured, leaped into an unclean glare of indulgence, extravagance, and cruelty. As we peruse the page, it almost seems to stain the fingers that turn it over, and we go away with ejaculations of horror and disgust. The animal passions had kindled into such mastery as that emperor and courtier, men and women, master and slave, parent and child, seemed set on fire of hell. That age, it is admitted by those not partial to Christianity, saw humanity at its worst; the despoiled image of God was blotted from the soul, wickedness had demonstrated its strength, and philosophy and art, as independent forces, had shown their pitiable weakness as well. The world has not yet recovered from the profane shock of that dissolute time; nor will it until He who braved its blushless face with the sweet purity of His own, comes to the coronation of the final victory. That age, remember, was not wanting in a pretentious philosophy; a philosophy not wholly without some flashes of truth, and in some instances born of noble souls, but nothing could be plainer than that these often fanciful and visionary speculations were no match for a paganism, whose poison infected the

blood and molded the life of the people from the palace to the hovel.

Philosophy made some attempt to break the dominion of evil and to recover the empire to a passable virtue, but the effort was only as the breath of an infant to stir the ocean's depths. The most recent writer on this subject says: "There was no power of philosophical teaching, of ceremonial religion, of all regulating government, of all criticising society, there was no power known to heathenism, of lovely art, historic recollection, sonorous eloquence, stinging satire, which could avail in that momentous and awful crisis. It seemed as if the disastrous influence of that epoch in history must continue to sweep on, pitiless and destroying, over the centuries which still were to come, and over the lands in which still stood pre-eminent the imperial and conquering name of Rome."* One thing is sure: the verdict of history, whether from friends or foes, need not be misunderstood. That confederation of giant evil, buttressed about by every social, material, and imperial advantage, stood defiant until the faith and life of the despised Galilean were set over against it. It seemed preposterous that it should win against odds so immense. To many, its pretence then, as now, was counted presumptuous; but the witness of the

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* "Divine Origin of Christianity," Storrs, p. 263.

time and of all the ages since, hush the objector and proclaim in the hearing of the heavens and the earth that in Christianity alone was the power and glory of a permanent victory. Do you ask what did Christianity do for the Roman empire? I might answer, Christianity did then for heathenism what it has been doing for the world ever since, and will continue to do until the bright vision of the new heavens and the new earth is realized. The question is susceptible, however, of definite and gratifying answer. On the retreating surges of that blackest cloud that ever spread like a pall over the world, the religion of the cross hung its bow, and the sunken empire thrilled with new life and hope.

Through a sea of corruption unparalleled, and amid a series of persecutions that lighted up well-nigh three centuries with the fires of martyrdom, it took its way, and though at unspeakable cost, it won at last; the hot flames of persecution were quenched, but the torch of the Gospel burned on and burns yet. It struck down idolatry in the deification of emperors, and in the base adoration of senseless gods, and exalted in the thought of men a proper conception of Him of whom all are things. It purified worship, and from an occasion of sensual gratification it restored it to a ministry honoring to the object and ennobling to the subject, and from the discord of a profane jargon it gave to it the bright wings of faith, devoutness,

and praise. It revolutionized the laws of the empire, and in the place of cruelty, selfishness, and tyranny, put right, justice, and protection. It recognized the brotherhood of a common race, gave humane impulse to manhood, put the arms of pity about the children, and raised woman from the debasement of her sex on the one hand, and from the disability of her faculties on the other. It swept from society, as a mountain torrent bears away worthless drift, a deep, foul scum of impurity, a gorgeousness and tinsel that were only a covering for distortion and deformity, and restored to it the order, usefulness, and beauty of regenerated life. It created the home, and made it the image of heaven. Upon this amethyst among all the triumphs of Christianity, let us pause to look, for while it is an evidence of its own excellence, it is a test of other religions as well. For 600 years, Mohammedanism, on its own ground, and with much to its advantage, has wrought, and the home is not yet to be found in its vast domain, and woman is still a slave. For the ideal of the Christian family, and for all those tender and beautiful ministries that constantly adorn it, for the sacred unison of noblest manhood with purest womanhood, for the immortal glory of motherhood, for all that is divine at the hearthstone and by the cradle, and sweet and tender in the one queen word home, we are indebted to Christianity. These are among its early triumphs. In the beginning it did

just what has marked its victories in each succeeding age.

Thus, after three centuries of such fidelity and self-sacrifice, as witness to the superhuman power of grace on the one hand and glorified humanity on the other, the struggle was ended, and the cross was lifted in the palace of the Cæsars, the emperor uncovered and bowed before Him by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, and the religion of the despised Nazarene, over an opposition unparalleled in its bitterness and persistence, had mastered the empire.

What say you, my friends? Whence came this simple, yet strangely masterful faith? Is it from men, or is it from God? With this first triumph resistance did not stop; neither did the mustard-seed cease to grow. Every subsequent century has brought its crown of thorns to the brow of Jesus, yet where is the age that has not laid some splendid trophy at His feet? Only pausing to pray for His enemies, and to bid His disciples bless and curse not, the living Lord moves forward in His holy mission, and gradually but surely the distance between heaven and earth is diminishing, and even now faith hears the sweet symphony of the angels, as if they were coming back to sing as of old. To crowd into the briefest summary what has filled enchanting volumes, Christianity has taken the lead in all the controlling and noblest movements of modern history; it unques-

tionably regenerated the tottering Roman empire, civilized the Northern barbarians, hastened and gave perpetual benediction to the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and ever since it has produced and promoted that which is most praiseworthy and enduring in our modern civilization. If what Christianity has done in any field be not yet complete, we are assured that present attainments furnish a most hopeful prophecy of what is yet to be achieved. If social disorder and war have not yet ceased, it is only because governments and communities have not sufficiently imbibed the spirit of the Prince of Peace to make the unselfish recognition of mutual rights a sovereign virtue, and to hail His purpose to usher in the time—

> "When no war nor battle sound
> Shall be heard the earth around."

Christianity has already put "the bright crown of domestic queenship upon woman's brow," and transfigured the delicacy in which a ruder age found only a slave's fetters into a "girdle of beauty and honor." Whatever right place woman holds in civilized society to-day is due most of all to Christianity. With human nature constituted as it is, with the animal dominating over the moral and spiritual, we hold that the degradation, enslavement, and merciless blight of all that is pure and beautiful in woman are inevitable

apart from the direct or indirect influences of Christianity. History corroborates this fact, not only in those countries where no religion has prevailed, but also where another than Christianity has lifted its standard. Without the ennobling immortality, the growing life toward a perfect ideal, the tenderness, the purity, the stirring faith and hope which Christianity inculcates and illustrates; in short, without the one perfect Christ who was born of a virgin, in the nature of the case woman must go down, and in her fall this world's sweetest hope would vanish in the darkness. But Christianity has already rescued us from that despair, and with grateful exultation we may take up these words of the gifted author of "Gesta Christi": "If, as often seems, a night of scepticism in America and Europe is to descend upon the most generous minds among the men, woman will still keep lighted the torch of faith, and guide the race till the morning shines again to all" (p. 298).

But in nothing perhaps that attracts the attention and commands the admiration of men, even who do not honor its Founder with their faith, does Christianity more certainly confirm its claims than in the development of the *Benevolent Instinct*. Here is a fact that makes our holy faith beautiful as the light, pervasive as the air, and imperishable as God. If it boasts a divinity of origin and character, it illustrates a humanity that makes all the world kin, exalts the

love of our neighbor into a supreme law, makes its observance a test of the divine in us, and furnishes the sunny prophecy of a brotherhood wide as the race. When through the efficacy of its wonderful self-sacrifice it redeems and reinstates the soul, it as promptly extends the right hand of its humanity to lift up the helpless, to assist the needy, and to minister with its hallowed touch at the bedside of sickness and death. It comes to reveal the nature of God, and to help us to see something of His fatherly heart in the face of Jesus Christ; and it has achieved this purpose, as no other religion has been able to do. God's revelation in Christ covers the horrid image of atheism with deepest blush, smites wrong with merciless severity, and at the same time, with its profound compassion for penitent trust, opens a free and welcome way to the little child, the crowned sovereign or the weary prodigal.

It came to lift man up to rightful dignity and to set his eye upon the hope that enshrines his immortal worth. Max Müller says the word mankind never fell from the lips of Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle. "Where the Greek saw barbarians, we see brethren. . . . . Where the Greek saw nations, we see mankind toiling and suffering, severed by oceans, divided by language, set apart by national enmity, yet evermore tending, under a divine control, toward the fulfilment of that inscrutable purpose for which the world was

created and man placed in it bearing the image of God." It is only through an apprehension of God in Christ, only by imbibing the spirit of His life, that we acquire an unselfish sympathy for, and may effectively assist in, the uplifting of humanity. Christianity in its own marvellous incarnation is at once the illustration of human helplessness, human necessity, and human worth. You will learn before this series of lectures is completed, if you have not already done so, that there is nothing noble in man to which Christianity does not make the heartiest response; its appeal is to all that is good, its emphatic condemnation is upon all that is bad. Much as evil men have had to say against it, and strangely as many now oppose it, it has no parallel as an angel of mercy, unwearied of its flight in this sorrowful world. To blot it from the world would be to those even who despise it, as the quenching of mother-love in the home to the children. Christianity has wrought many things more startling, but nothing more divine than the manner in which it has hushed the sobs, and kindled anew the hopes of earth's weary and pilgrim children, given celestial companionship to the poor, a sweeter and humbler mind to the great, and to those whose hopes have dropped like wilted flowers into the grave, or about whom the last shadows have gathered, a bright light in which resurrection, reunion, and immortality were imaged. When singing angels heralded the advent,

the world did not know the meaning of pity, but Christianity lifts "an altar to it in every Christian heart." The boast of a brutal courage, the vaunt of a heroism whose glory was its shame, is written everywhere in the history of paganism, and all this, despite the philosophy and culture which now and again made feeble effort to put some nobler heart into the world's rude life. It was left in the beginning for Christianity to ennoble humanity by the true and humane proclamation of its rights, and to furnish the spirit for their illustration and maintenance.

Let the spirit and law of this heaven-born faith become the spirit and law of the wide world, and no toiling man on all the continents will ever be oppressed, nor will the sovereigns of material or secular power any more be menaced. The anthem that thrilled the hearts of the shepherds, and fell from the lips of choiring angels, would become the song of a peaceful world. Christianity is unquestionably entitled to the palm for the exercise of all those tender ministries, and the establishment and propagation of those institutions which heal the hurt, and open their doors to the sad and sick of every clime. If it be trite to speak of hospitals, asylums, and infirmaries, along with numerous organizations and societies, in which, for the relief and reform of others, noble men and women bear about in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus, it is not without significance that

these are peculiar to and coextensive with Christianity. Let him who desires bear testimony to paganism and infidelity; we may safely challenge the world to produce the single home, or heart, or life to which either of them has given a noble aspiration, a soothing comfort, or a permanent hope.

The best known apostle of infidelity in this country has recently challenged Christianity to produce a man equal to Alex. von Humboldt. He was not personally partial to the Christian faith, but he could not resist the touch of its influence, and had at least the candor which he who champions his name as a witness to infidelity most certainly lacks. At his best the great scientist uncovers to do honor to a system to blaspheme which is the debauch of manhood. After speaking of the influence of the Roman empire in promoting national unity, Von Humboldt says: "But the feeling of communion and unity of the whole human race, and of the equal rights of all its families, is derived from a more noble source. It is founded upon deeper motives of the mind, and upon religious convictions. Christianity has assisted most powerfully in promoting the idea of the human race; it has acted beneficially in rendering man more human in his manners and institutions. The idea of humanity is interwoven with the earliest Christian doctrines" (Vol. II., p. 232).

When men from too little learning, or from too

much vanity, venture to affirm that Christianity underestimates human nature and discrowns the soul that submits to it, the charge, in the face of facts so manifest and unanswerable to the contrary, is absurd beyond respect, and an insult to ordinary intelligence. As well contend that there is no warmth in sunshine, and no beauty in the flowers. The highest liberty is the liberty of right, the liberty of order without constraint, the exercise of every noble faculty in its proper sphere. It is the liberty of the stars that never rush into mutiny against their king; the liberty of the birds that sing, and trust Him who feedeth them; the liberty of angels whose highest freedom is submission to the Sovereign Will. Christianity is the sworn enemy of that license, the spirit of which, whether in persecution, selfishness, or crime, is cruel, tyrannical, and destructive of the most sacred rights of the soul.

Wherever wrong and error dominate, there we may look for the galling yoke and the tyrant's sceptre; but that we shall find noblest, truest liberty wherever truth guides and the spirit of the Lord is, is as certain as that we shall see the flush of dawn by looking toward the east in the morning. It is a fact which every age confirms, that if the spirit and life of Christianity could be realized in every home and life in a given community, there you would find every sacred right conserved, a model social order, no need for

courts and prisons, an absence of wrong and fear, and a reign of love and peace that would image heaven. To such an ideal it has not attained, but that is its course as surely as the course of the sun is across the arch of the sky. It is hardly conceivable that Christianity will meet with a more stubborn resistance than it has already mastered, or, if it should, that it will not be able to wrest victory from the assault. This is not my dream, but the confident assurance of its Founder, and sustained by facts that gird it to-day like a granite wall.

It has often had a hard time; its children have been compelled to take shelter in dens and caves of the earth, and to hush the voice of prayer into a whisper as they bowed in the refuge of the rocks, and many a hard battle waits its march to the final victory; but from age to age God has not left Himself without a witness, and so Christianity will go on overcoming and overcoming until He who gave it to the world comes, "having on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords," and that other vision of the seer is the glad sight of a saved world; the city of God will have descended from heaven, "having her light like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

To my mind, then, Christianity, the miracle of whose origin is equalled by the miracle of its history

in the world, is its own witness; the testimony of its own matchless work in the world girds us about; it rises before us like the tall peaks of a mountain range against the face of the sky, radiant with a lustre as imperishable as it is unearthly. I find no solution of the problem of its history in the brightest earthly genius, in the best manhood, in the most marvellous circumstances, still less in obscurity, ignorance, or poverty, nor is it the outcome of any force of evolution; by an overwhelming tide of facts it declares itself from God as surely as light points to the sun, and the perfume of the air in spring-time points to the flowers.

I have had no time to speak of its evangelizing faculty, and of its chain of missions girding the globe to-day, and making the waste places of the earth to blossom as the rose, nor of much else to which Christianity is entitled, in support of the claims it makes. As well attempt to ensphere the ocean in a drop, or the sun in one of his beams, as to crowd into one discourse a history which for wonder and benediction constitutes the mightiest miracle of the ages. I am awed in the presence of the unparalleled character and triumphs of Christianity, and in adoring gratitude I can only exclaim in the language of the prophet: "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working."

From these meagre statements I beg to present briefly for your candid consideration the following conclusions:

1. *The history of Christianity clearly proves its superiority to all opposition.*

No effort has been spared, it will be admitted, to gainsay or to match its claims, to expunge its written revelation from the earth, and to expel the spirit and the very memory of it from the human heart. But so all-pervasive as the air is it, so identified with every noblest faculty of humanity, with every true element of progress, and with the very nature of the eternal God, that an effort to pluck the sun from his place would not seem more futile than these persistent endeavors have been. The astounding fact remains—Christianity is still here, strong and fresh with youth, as instinct with life, as flushed with power, and as radiant with immortality, as was its Author when He stood forth on the morning of the third day with a conquered grave behind Him.

In the well-spoken words of another, Christianity "has fallen in no combat to which it has been called. It has been proved inadequate to no work presented. The most prolonged and passionate assaults of its ablest antagonists have failed to dislodge it from the minds of the communities which have tried it most thoroughly. Its influence appears as plainly to-day on every side as it has done in any time since it was

first proclaimed. The eagle of the Faith is not yet weary of its mighty wings" (Storrs, p. 349).

If neither the depth of human malice, the variety of human ingenuity, the mastery of human skill, the vigor of human learning, nor the weakness of human ignorance, the marshalled force of compacts, nor the insinuation of individual influence, nor any other of the many forms of resistance which have set against it, with so much to their advantage, have been able to uproot it or to quench its growing life, I submit, may it not possibly be from God? At least there is sufficient in this fact to give a significant emphasis to the inspired Word: "But if it be of God, ye can not overthrow it."

2. *The history of Christianity proves that it is superior to all other religions that have made similar claims respecting their origin, and like demands upon the faith of men.*

I can not enter now upon anything like a thorough examination of other religions with a view to their estimate by the side of the Christian faith, or of its own worth after such a test. Its history challenges the comparison, and unquestionably sustains its claim to superiority. Whatever their pretence, the history of other religions has failed to disclose any supreme, still less any supernatural claim. They have not responded to the best aspirations of the soul, nor have they succeeded in creating a community that could

produce or even harmonize with the highest civilization. Judged by their own achievements, the most liberal verdict can only attribute to the best of them a human origin. Take Mohammedanism. After all that can be said for it, it is cold, selfish, pitiless. His tongue would falter who would venture to stand before its flaming gate and say, "God is love." These lines of Lord Houghton describe at once its spirit and its inferiority to the religion of Jesus:

"Mohammed's truth lay in a holy book;
Christ's, in a sacred life.

. . . . . .

"So while the world rolls on from change to change,
And realms of thought expand,
The letter stands without expanse or range,
Stiff as a dead man's hand.

"While, as the life-blood fills the growing form,
The spirit Christ has shed
Flows through the ripening ages fresh and warm,
More felt than heard or read."

There is no spirit of life or aggressiveness here. Mohammedanism has no heart, hence no adaptation to human need. Put all the ethnic religions together, and set their excellences as jewels to adorn the faiths of the world, yet beside them Christianity is the pearl supreme—divine.

Buddhism no longer advances, and Mohammedanism languishes in its conquest and must go:

"While blazoned as on heaven's immortal noon
The cross leads generations on."

It is not needful to say that we do not contend that the mastery of Christianity over all opposition, and its superiority above all other religions, are in themselves conclusive proofs of its divine origin; we are by no means shut up to these facts; others lie back of them and underneath them, as the rock foundation of a massive superstructure; but we may claim that these facts are harmonious notes in the choral of testimony now being given in this place, and along with what you have heard and will yet hear, we may point to the other religions of the world, as they vanish before the majesty of Christianity, and say with Him whose word is supreme, "Ye are from beneath, I am from above. Ye are of this world, I am not of this world."

3. *If Christianity be such a system, is it not manly, is it not loyalty to God, is it not noblest response to the highest faculties of our being to accept and witness for this faith?*

Manifestly the history of Christianity makes a strong appeal to our personal faith. It has put all men under serious obligations, and for all noblest ends we are so dependent upon its influence, that to blush for it is to discrown manhood. It has come to redeem the soul, to restore the higher faculties to supremacy, and to recover man to sonship with God. The highest purpose and the best hope in human life are realized in it. In every way it puts honor upon men,

and for every ministry gives enlarged capacity. It is manly to avow such a religion. We owe it to all that is purest, most useful, and most enduring in us. We owe it to Him in whose image we were made. It is proper to read the history, but we can only put our manly personal testimony on the side of the Christian faith, by bringing to its Author the tribute of our trust and obedience. To all such, but only to such, our Lord says: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." That Christianity is competent to recover the soul to God, is just as much a fact of history as any we have named. Than its individual triumphs, it has no sublimer record. That it has rescued men and women who were enslaved by sin and mastered by unbelief, to the liberty and moral excellence of the sons and daughters of God, and made their lives a benediction and their names a hallowed memory to the generations, is a fact as incontrovertible as that which reveals the inventor's genius or the author's name.

Such a religion gives a high purpose, a new charm to life, it exalts human nature, and I can only be true to myself and true to God when I give it my personal trust and obedience. Unbelief may sneer at what the Christian calls an experience of this faith, but what is inwoven with the soul's life, and has enabled men and women in all the ages to join a heroic courage with a becoming humility, and say, as cheerfully under adverse as under favorable circumstances, "I know whom I have

believed," is not to be tossed aside as a trick of affectation, the fancy of a disturbed brain, or a flourish of sentiment. It is a fact that has characterized this faith in the great and in the lowly, in the young and in the aged, and in the learned and in the unlearned alike, from the beginning. It belongs to Christianity to produce just such an experience, it is Christ's own promise to His followers, and to deny it is to violate the most enlightened and reliable consciousness of the human soul. Here, indeed, for the individual is the conclusive argument. Here is the sleepless sentinel that guards the citadel of the soul. Here the divine illustration that gives spiritual vision to faith, and makes the regenerated heart to look into the face of God. Is it not manly to avow such a religion? If we would make worthy recognition of the noble in us, and of Him, "in whom we live and move and have our being," can we do less than give to this faith the test of honest trial? A great army of witnesses have so proven it, and in all that illustrious host not one has ever come forward to declare that it has been found wanting. For nearly two thousand years there has not been a single testimony against the Christian faith, from among those who have given it the trial it demands and merits. I submit, is there no argument in this? The voice of history sounds across the centuries with a great thunder, declaring that He is faithful who promised, and that what He

promised He has proven Himself able to perform. The air is heavy with doubt to-day, but it is not the manliness of men, nor any struggle for true liberty that makes it so. He is not a slave, no weak visionary in whose soul the composure of God's peace sings while the storm rages. He is a prince among men, though he appear to many among the worldly wise and great as one who trifles with senseless mysteries. Christ's claim to have the heathen for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession, is still supreme.

In view of this vast claim Christianity appeals to each individual before me now; it bids you set in contrast with it, and with its sublime history in the world, every system that has been set over against it; the tree has grown to such mastery, that you may judge of its fruit and not mistake. A religion with such claims and with a testimony so broad, so marvellous, and so manifest on every hand, deserves, I am sure, not only your intelligent thought, but has a right to demand your heartiest confidence. It is noble, it is safe, it is the dawn of man's brightest and most enduring hope to stand on this side. He has reached the most excellent coronation possible to humanity in this life, who does not despise the world nor anything good in it, but putting all lower things in their proper place, stands imperial above them, and exclaims: "*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

VI.

THE ARGUMENT FROM HUMAN NECESSITY.

W. V. TUDOR, D.D.

"*He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.*"—PSALM cxlvii. 9.

"*Are ye not much better than they?*"—MATT. vi. 26.

"*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"—GAL. vi. 14.

VI.

THE ARGUMENT FROM HUMAN NECESSITY.

THE discourse of this evening, to be true to its subject, ought to seem, in its several propositions, like something my hearers have heard or thought of before; for the argument is from human wants as they are met in Christ: and these wants, to be such, must be more or less conscious and familiar. The discourse of the hour seeks only their true interpretation, and to show how their demands are met in Christ. Let us adopt, first, the speculative; and secondly, the practical method of argument.

First, the speculative. To know man rightly one must know his deepest and most urgent wants. These, while they testify to his ignorance, weakness, unhappiness, or guilt, also proclaim his capacities, and are prophecies of his future greatness. To rightly interpret and supply these wants is to redeem and glorify human nature. A little reflection on some of our conscious spiritual needs will show this. For example, the old question, "If a man die,

shall he live again?" expresses a want as old as the race. There is also the want of moral goodness, or a conscious imperfection in that regard, of the human being. Christ has developed that want in man beyond any other teacher that has ever appeared on earth. Whenever He has been revealed to the soul, He has set it to longing most profoundly and ardently after holiness. There is, too, the great need of the soul for God, felt in different degrees and expressed in ten thousand ways, yet felt by all. When one of Christ's disciples wrote, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought," since prayer is the voice of need, he expressed the general idea of man's need of something, he rightly knows not what, and therefore can not intelligently seek or define. Except it be in one like Voltaire, whom an acute and not unfriendly critic characterized as the man without a soul, there is a mood of the universal human spirit which demands or postulates God. The Unknowable of Herbert Spencer is the unintelligent prayer of the soul. We know not what to pray for as we ought; but there has been the prayer, in all times, the unutterable groaning of man for some such being as God, to respond to a conscious self or faculty in us, as light is for the eye, and food for hunger, and love for the heart. Christ stirred this want in the human breast as it had not been felt before. He came at a time when the idea of God had fallen into decadence

among the Gentiles, and the Jewish God had become an abstraction. He set men at thinking anew upon the great want. The Lord Jesus Christ appeared as the mediator between God and man, and the representation of His life which we have, must impress every candid mind as designed on the one side, to make man feel his need of God, and, on the other, to reveal God as supplying that need. Was He born more of woman or of the Spirit? Man seems to be spirit and flesh, but his lower nature must be recognized as holding an undue and vastly disproportionate place in him, or as being in such ascendency, especially as affecting the aspect of morals and moral goodness, as that he is not a fair representative of an easily conceivable higher, purer, and spiritual nature. Intellect, which we may distinguish as spiritual, has been mighty enough in the earth; but the salient spirituality of Christ was at the point of man's utter deficiency, and therefore greatest need, viz.: The moral quality of a rational being. He produced no inventions, he wrote no books, he pretended to no letters, albeit when He spoke they said, "Never man spake like this man," and "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" He was all mind, as to that; but it was not dazzling genius the world stood particularly in need of; it was moral purity and happiness and peace and life and God. Behold in Christ the intermediary; poor and hungry and suf-

fering as flesh in utmost disability can be, a very man of matter; and yet again fading away into a realm of teaching and example, until we feel that, could we look behind the vanishing form, we should see the whole spiritual world. He stood between, the mediator between God and man, the very want of man in his ignorance and flesh, intermediation between spirit and matter, to reveal both to man who is both; intermediation commending itself to our intelligence as the wise and perfect way to deal with a being of man's properties and endowments. Christ was scarcely human, and yet He was nothing if He was not man. The typical sceptic, Renan, does not know exactly what to make of Him. He sees something more than human in His words, though subject, of course, to his own interpretation. How marked was the absence of human ambition in Christ, with the following He had; and then He never sinned. Renan says: "Free from selfishness, the source of all our sorrows, He thought only of His work, His race, humanity." He stood between.

Is our argument from human necessities? There were a thousand wants of mankind to which Christ was utterly indifferent, except to warn against them, such as those of gain and pleasure and the world. It is not needful for our purpose to discriminate by definition among human wants. Man's wants are not always his longings, nor his longings his wants.

When Plato, in his "Republic," uses the simile of the sea-god Glaucus, and interprets, "The soul of man is in a similar condition, disfigured by ten thousand ills," he speaks of a condition of necessity that throws in the shade every other. He says: "We have seen the soul only in a condition which may be compared to that of Glaucus, whose original image can hardly be discerned, because his natural members are broken off and crushed, and in many ways damaged by the waves, and incrustations have grown over them of sea-weed, and shells, and stones, so that he is liker to some sea-monster than to his natural form." In like manner, Christ's figures of man as sick and lost are true to nature, and intimate the deepest necessities. He speaks not of outward and temporal wants, but of those deep-seated ones which belong to the very nature of the soul. Was the greatest of all teachers mistaken, who gave an impulse to human thought on God and sin, with reference to our actual state in this world, which has not been lost, but at these distant ages keeps the active mind of Christendom at work upon a science, for which no better nomenclature has been found than his two great terms, God and sinners? A Saviour is the philosophical response to man as he is.

What does that steamer want yonder, helplessly floundering in the trough of the sea? She wants her propeller. The shaft or screw is out of order. But now see those seamen aboard of her. They are busy

fitting up rigging and masts and sails. They seem to turn no attention to the repair of the shaft or break. The ship started with a propeller, her whole construction indicates a propeller, and yet those sailors seem not one to have the least idea of endeavoring to put the screw in working order again. They act as if ignorant of the cause of the disaster. They conceive of nothing for their need to set the ship in motion, but the old, insufficient sail. Like to this is the folly of those who, conscious that there is something wrong in human nature, fail to look for the true cause, and to give a rational interpretation to human needs. They invent expedients, give false interpretations, and seek with these to move man forward to his destiny.

Conscience and history, as well as revelation, testify to the sin and fall of our race, and so there comes the need of redemption. What folly to ignore this fact, or to attempt to set it aside by the theory that sin is not essentially and absolutely evil, but only a stage or episode in the history of progressive being, or else the disciplinary trial of a more refined and exalted virtue, contributing ultimately to the ever accruing sum total of happiness and good in the everlasting universe.

But will this theory do in actual life? Will it save the criminal from the penitentiary or the gallows? How then can it serve as a sail to carry the disabled

and sinking vessel of humanity safely on its course to the desired haven? The very construction of man points to a Saviour when enlightened reason comprehends it.

Just as a skilful palæontologist may know how to construct an animal which he never saw, from the thigh-bone, by certain laws of relation, juxtaposition, and function, so if it were profitable we might proceed at length from the faculties which man possesses, or from a selected set of faculties, to build up in man a being whose crown is the divine image, whose character perfection, whose heirloom immortality; and so find in him a being whose present need, logically, is restoration to a lost estate.

When Shelley, one of the world's interpreters, wrote,—

> "O stream,
> Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
> Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
> Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
> Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,
> Thy searchless fountain, and invisible source
> Have each their type in me."—

he simply admitted that for a stream there must be a source, though invisible. Jesus taught very naturally, there must be a vine for a branch. Despite all the diatribes of infidelity, man will feel as though he had sustained a loss, of propeller, source, vine, something which his construction indicates he started with in the mystery of life. Why for example, must

dear and loving ones part, never to meet again? Cruel loss. Did love start that way? The ancient Greek myth was of Prometheus, that he moulded a human form out of the dust of the earth, and then by fire stolen from heaven, animated it with a living soul. Spirit can not be fire, for fire can not think. We did not start that way. Another theory says, "The action of that congeries of atoms whose union forms the brain, constitutes the soul." Did we start that way? Yonder organ supposes deft fingers to draw from it the anthem, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." My soul is not in me, it is I. If now I attempt to value my soul, to weigh myself to myself, not all the solid globes of creation put into the opposite scale will bring the balance to an equipoise. To purchase myself for myself, the wealth of the universe, did I possess it, would be no more than an adequate sum to offer; to speak my preciousness, words disgust me with their unmeaning sound and seal my lips in silence; to think my value, thought is drowned in the deep of meditation, and rises panting to the surface, glad to draw breath in a medium more congenial to it. In the old Book I read: "What is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world and lose himself?" It is Christ's philosophy of salvation. He came to awaken human wants and to teach men to place a true value upon themselves. We started with a God-given self, and have lost on the voyage.

We see it now, that it is the propeller that is lost. Man needed to be awakened as from sleep and death. He needed light. Was it possible for him to be so lost and ignorant? The ignorance of man, after all his sciences, might be the demonstration of many discourses. With all the vaunted progress of the race, there are lost arts which have not been recovered to this proud day, but some day they may be, and if so, the great, fond term progress may allow some place for the discovery of God, and spiritual things lost along with other knowledge and parts which his construction indicates belong to man, because once possessed, though now absent and unrecovered. Hence was Christ's trumpet call of men to repentance. Hence He taught the unintelligent prayer of need to say, "Our Father who art in heaven," and as Prof. Christlieb most beautifully says: "What teaching about God can be more sublime, or more adapted to the yearnings of our heart than this? Where do we find an idea of God which satisfies our religious needs so abundantly as the truth that God is love?" Does not every heart, led by an involuntary bias, say "yea and amen" to this? Does not this idea force itself directly as the truth upon all, even unbelievers? Any man who, even in the smallest degree, acknowledges his deepest need, will lay hold on this truth with both hands, and cry out, "Yea, this is God; and He must be this, not merely on His own behalf, on behalf of

His moral perfection and beauty, but for my sake also, if there is to be any hope for me; the God of love is the only God who can satisfy my needs." The human mind is undoubtedly the arena of most conflicting thoughts about divine things. What is technically termed unbelief has its powerful temptations, and is so utterly impracticable that the only philosophical response to it, is that faith which Jesus taught, the sole condition of salvation; which has been the wonder and dispute of the ages, and yet has been the single organizing principle of the Christian Church and civilization. If I lack faith, my greatest want, I surely find it replied to in Him who so framed His own, and the teachings of His disciples, as to make the hackneyed term, "believe," the single great formula of all the power and prevalence that Christianity has had in the world to this day. There is a strange demand of the human soul met in simple faith; that is, faith is an affinity of our being for the spiritual and immortal such as a bar of steel has for magnetism. We must believe, we do believe, or our wondrous life is about lost. Absolute infidelity makes life a fragment indeed, a frustum cut close to the ground, of a pyramid of consciousness, and veins, and organs, and powers, and raptures, and knowledge, and glory, whose apex faith conceives to pierce the dome of eternity. We must believe, and Christ gave direction to the affinity, so as to make faith almost the apotheosis of man. The exercise of faith is the great Christian secret.

At this point it is time for the speculative, which can only be symbolical, to give place to the practical argument of our theme.

Second. The practical argument. Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am." The Christian says, "I know whom I have believed." But our point of departure here, shall be rather where we left off in the former part of the discussion. Henry Rogers well puts it: "A man who thinks this world all, must find it hard to say anything consolatory to one who feels that all is fleeting away from him (in death). How consoling it must be for a wife to be told by her husband, 'We are about, my dear creature, to part, and to part forever.' You are nothing but a chance composition of organic molecules, nor am I anything more; we shall never have individual consciousness again. But let me tell you, for your unspeakable consolation, that you will pass into new forms and sublimely, though unconsciously, last forever." It is related of the dying moments of Dr. Samuel Johnson that, with his last breath, the great essayist said, "There is no rational principle by which a man can die contented, but a trust in the mercy of God through the merits of Jesus Christ"; and addressing his physician, he repeated, "My dear doctor, believe a dying man, there is no salvation but in the Lamb of God." It is authentically given as the inscription written by himself, to be read on the tombstone of Charles Reade, the distin-

guished and voluminous author—I quote only part, all being in the same vein—"I hope for holiness and happiness in a future life only from the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. He has promised, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,' and He will not break His word." It is a human experience that man can create no Eden for himself on earth where the sentence does not follow him: "So He drove out the man." The only antithesis to this ever uttered is in the very words, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise drive out." The cherubim guard is withdrawn, the flaming sword is sheathed, and the gate of Paradise is open again.

In another way, by experience, but without acknowledging it, John Stuart Mill, in his autobiography, discloses the need which the human soul has of God. The circumstance is in connection with the death of his wife. He says, "Her memory is to me a religion, and her approbation the standard by which, summing up as it does all worthiness, I endeavor to regulate my life." Her memory was his religion, and "to feel her still near him" was his only consolation, though he could not allow that she had any possible existence. Well might such a man, with indescribable sadness, say: "I call the flaw in my life, a flaw in life itself."

Thus, negatively as well as positively, human experience testifies to the necessity of religion. But the

joy of the soul in Christ constitutes the chief testimony to the power and reality of the Christian's faith. There is no gainsaying his joyful and positive declaration, "I know whom I have believed."

It is related of a revival occasion, that from curiosity a lawyer entered a meeting for the relation of Christian experience and took notes. But so impressed was he, that at the close he arose and said: "My friends, I hold in my hand the testimony of no less than sixty persons who have spoken here this evening, who all testify with one consent that there is a divine reality in religion, they having experienced its power in their own hearts. Many of these persons I know. Their word would be received in any court of justice. Lie they would not, I know; and mistaken they can not all be. I have hitherto been sceptical in relation to these matters. I now tell you that I am fully convinced of the truth, and intend to lead a new life. Will you pray for me?" The story would be worth nothing but that it has its counterpart in something familiar, I am sure, to every one whom I address.

It is to be accepted as the latest settlement of metaphysical philosophy, that reason is purely a mental faculty, without concrete contents, and that, psychologically considered, there is nothing contained in reason which could become the property of man in any other way than by means of experience. Ex-

perimental religion is its own grand argument. The very discovery to a man that he is a sinner, meets a want of his nature.

The Christian conviction of sin awakens this want in a thorough and most potent way. It condemns the world as guilty, and defies contradiction to its testimony in the face of all the moral evil that abounds. "Miserable sinners" is an expression that has touched humanity's great heart with a verisimilitude like nothing else; and the next thing is, "Have mercy upon us." Man needs mercy of God, if he ever needed anything. Even a German free-thinker writes: "Oh, do not tell me that to act uprightly, and to do one's duty, and to have a good conscience are sufficient. I ask you, ye virtuous ones, who among us does his duty and has a good conscience in the highest sense of the word? Not one among us all. We all are and remain striving and struggling ones, who in manifold ways err and stumble and fall short." It answers a very need of the soul to be shown that we are sinners, under wrath and over hell. It is the initial conviction of the regeneration which has been at once the testimony and the phenomenon of the Christian ages. There is positively no explanation of the change which, from time immemorial, has taken place in the dispositions, sentiments, and lives of men religiously, but the grace of God bringing a needed salvation. From the data of

experience the great Christian induction is drawn. This experience to be attained, has one inexorable condition, which is, that we seek God with the whole heart, for this precisely is faith with the heart; and "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." But, this done, a Divine power rests upon the soul of man; there is a change, a readjustment, as it were, of appetencies and habits of thought; the love of Christ begins its sweet constraint upon the man, and strange, happy joys come from the grand apocalypse of faith, as each may phrase it for himself, that "Jesus died for me." Oh, must not that be true which has given the truest satisfaction to the religious need of man? It is all in the formula, Jesus died for me. It answers the question of death, to solve whose dreary meaning, if possible, has been the final cause of all the philosophies which have inquired into the subjects of God and human destiny, as it was the final cause of Christ's work that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The philosophies have given up the problem in despair; Christianity gives the soul one thought, Jesus died for me. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the central glory of revelation's answer to our religious wants, and wherein lies its sufficiency is the final question of all knowledge in God and immortality, as far as man has attained on earth.

O wondrous cross! unto infidel culture foolishness,

and unto sin a stumbling-block, but unto us who are saved, ourselves of the same race of sinners and unbelievers, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. O wondrous cross! a beam of heaven's own light it has been upon moral darkness. He who giveth to the beast his food and to the young ravens which cry, has provided the cross for the spiritual needs of man. If it shall appear that we need forgiveness for our sins of perverse nature, that is pledged in the cross. O wondrous cross of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who suffered for us! Ye know His grace as it is recorded in the books. He was that Just One, a perfectly pure and holy being in a world where society and the human heart reek with moral pollution and selfishness and evil of every kind, and where virtue, purity, and truth have a struggling, faint existence. He took upon Himself, to bear for our sakes, the inevitable curse of a holy God upon such a wretched, guilty state as humanity exhibits, and which man, by a law of his mind, secretly curses in unmeasured terms. O wondrous cross! whereon the Son of God was the propitiation or mercy-seat for our sins. O wondrous cross! on which in agony and blood Jesus died, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Distance from God is the final consciousness of materialism, pantheism, deism, atheism, and the moral sense of mankind. Jesus brings us near to Him—as near as a child to a father,

as near as a heart to the bosom of infinite love. The high-priests of materialism chant at their altars the funeral dirges of a race, that shall ever and forever be silent in the grave. They have not heard, with the hearing of faith, that death has been swallowed up in victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the bold declaration of revelation, that it was God in the person of His Son, and made in the likeness of sinful flesh, who suffered on the cross for sinners. So Paul rapturously hails Him, as he glories in the cross alone, in comparison with all the culture and taste of the Greek world. At this point unutterable awe must seize our minds, as though we knew not what we said, when we proclaim of the great God such act and condescension. But in this act all of God, in fact, is given, and the human heart can ask, can need no more. It is the summit of answer to our religious needs.

What in comparison with this has human wisdom or philosophy to give the soul? About the cross Christian faith and hope have hovered in all time, with unspeakable comfort and satisfaction. Where, among the lowly and the illiterate, the blood of the Lamb has been scarcely more than a cant phrase, through very disability of understanding, faith in it has wrought a change, and joy in the life which has been a perpetual anthem of happy testimony. While, on the other hand, the great and the learned have

bowed at the foot of the cross, finding nothing ever so sweet and precious to their souls as that which they have discovered in it. Sir J. Bowring writes:

> "In the cross of Christ I glory,
> Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
> All the light of sacred story
> Gathers round its head sublime.
>
> "When the woes of life o'ertake me,
> Hopes deceive and fears annoy,
> Never shall the cross forsake me;
> Lo! it glows with peace and joy."

Its atonement for sin is ample, and then only is one prepared to apprehend the merits of the cross when his sense of need is deepest and most troublesome. Nay, it requires a very sense of emptiness to receive Christ, to realize that in Him all fulness dwells, and all for wretched man. Are we morally weak and consciously infirm in goodness, to our infinite chagrin? He is so far the complement of our better longings as to be in whole our righteousness. Are we in sorrow and trouble, of labyrinthine character, through various and unlike conditions which this life thoroughly knows? A mild and suffering face looks down upon us from the cross, as much as to say, "I know it all."

Through trouble and sorrow how many have been led to see their need of a higher sympathy and a diviner support than earth could afford. It is indeed

enough to move an infinite pity, to look upon the historic experience of the average human heart. I wonder if I can portray it in lines and colors of words. Sickness and pain of body are but the lighter traces of the shade that must be cast upon all the vivacity and vitality and brightness and prosperity with which, in colors dipped from the rainbow, we might represent the scene of life. Mistakes, and unimproved or lost opportunities, thicken the shadow which deepens as the years whirl on and can not be repeated; while drawbacks, disappointments, defeats, or losses overcast with clouds the successes of the most prosperous, the resources of the happiest. A troubled sea of restlessness now appears upon the scene, suddenly springing up, realized in youth, at the first stirrings of maturity, or the awakening consciousness of mind and aspiration and capacity. Again, it is a painful sight, the agitations of the heart arising, here and there, from the provocations which abound of anger and ill-feeling and severe anxiety and fierce distress; anon subsiding with time, or, if entirely passed away, leaving behind them the apprehension that a new ferment may at any moment work up the soul into the same tossings and heavings as before. In another part, eyes and hands and heart are uplifted in the demand for light upon the human mysteries; and the trials of a mind in the honest and earnest search for truth can be known only by those who have suffered. Else-

where upon the scene appears the conflict, the struggle of the better with the baser nature, in that terrible duel of the soul's dualism, a vivid knowledge of which is a clear and painful recollection, with every one before me, as he recalls the times when temper or appetite or cupidity or self-will—in short, sin—got the better of him, made him wrong in spirit and action, despite all his finer feelings and more upright principles to the contrary, and extorted the cry, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" And beyond all this struggle and conflict is the grave.

I believe in Christianity because it has one short method with all these mental and moral states,—to enlighten, cheer, deliver; to give peace, relief, and hope; and that method is expressed in a spiritual law of Christ's discovery to us, and which is as infallible as either of Kepler's three laws in the astronomical world, viz.: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John vii. 17). Not the speaker but the truth is the test and authority of divine truth. It is so in nature. What is all physical science but the homage of the mind before the works of nature? Man must be willing to follow nature's will to know her doctrine, and not endeavor to conform her to his theory. So it was found out that the earth is spherical and revolves around the sun, when man did na-

ture's will, so to speak, and surrendered his own ideas that the world must be flat and rested on a tortoise's back. In like manner Christianity is the homage, the submission of the mind to the truth as it is. We must let the truth teach us, as the worlds in order have passed before the astronomer and taught him their gravitations; as genera and species have instructed the philosopher, and as all nature amazes the mind of the observer by the way she does things, while man can only sit by and watch and wonder and learn in receptive obedience. The concept of God,—"all o'er, consummate, absolute, full-orbed, in His whole round of glorious rays complete,"—is beyond human capacity. No system of Him can be framed by the mind of man. But the Christian student, sitting in submission before the arcana of God, who has ordained the system of salvation, finds that Jesus Christ has power on earth to forgive sins, which is the first great fundamental fact in spiritual things, as gravitation is in the movements of the planetary and stellar universe. What, for instance, has that man discovered, after an example of ever-current history in the Church,—the man who, stubborn and worldly in his opposition to religion, is finally overtaken by conviction; and on some auspicious day returns to his family from the place of prayer, greets his praying wife with a new and gentle manner, exhibits a new light in his eye, a new expression on his countenance,

a new, kind style of his entireness? He has found the Saviour, and behold, he prayeth.

Nor is the testimony any less clear, of a new power of self-government vouchsafed to the soul in religion, and the enthronement at last of the spiritual over the carnal mind, in the true redemption of our nature to the divine image. It is a blessed consummation, the idea of which leads naturally to that which shall be the closing as it is the crowning subjective consideration for the truth of religion, viz., that eternal destiny or salvation is determined not by a man's works of righteousness that he has done, but by what he is in Jesus Christ. Your thoughts fly instantly to works, fruits, virtue, exemplified as the test of character, and there are "fruits of the Spirit"; but it requires only a quickened conscience to realize that the highest ideal of obedience conceivable for imperfect man falls short of the glory of God. Being, and not doing, this is the sublime mystery of Christianity that quiets guilty fears, inspires peace of conscience, explains the sanctification of the sinner unto meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, and is absolutely the satisfying trust of the soul that has learned it, and that is most alive to the perplexing problems of human life and destiny. It is at this point precisely that restless thinkers of the Christian nations, having vainly endeavored to quench the flames of hell in floods of philosophical speculation, have

found a divine response to their inward yearnings in the philosophy that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, and have realized in embracing it, that Christianity met as nothing else would answer, the wants in the human breast of a deep and shamefaced moral incompetency.

Having thus completed the course of inquiry, which in the difficulty of deciding upon the route of thought to pursue in one brief discourse upon our theme, we proposed to ourselves as most appropriate for the occasion, it will be seen that we have claimed for Christianity, the revelation of God and spiritual things, deliverance from the sense of guilt, and the conception of a higher ideal of goodness than is natural to the mind, in satisfaction of the spiritual wants of man. It remains for us only for a moment, in conclusion, to revel in the lively hope concerning which you heard the apostolic testimony presented in the first lecture of the course; the lively hope unto which we have been begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, as the second lecture illustrated; the hope brought us by the Person of whom the third lecture treated, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light; the hope built upon the rock of ethical truth, as the fourth lecture expounded; the lively hope that has lived through the ages of Christian history which the fifth lecture surveyed.

Newton can follow the stars and extort from them their secrets, and handle the reins by which they are guided, and predict their movements for thousands of years; but with all their concentrated blaze of light, he can not tell where he himself shall be after only threescore years and ten. Sir Humphrey Davy can give the safety-lamp to miners, but none to the delvers in the shallower mine of the grave. Stephenson and Eads can bridge the Tyne and the Mississippi, but they have no arch to fling across the river of death. Science can plant the lighthouse to warn the night-sailing ship off the dangerous coast, but it points the eye to no light kindled on those phantom shores that are never approached but in the night, the night of death. Columbus can discover America, but not the continent of immortality. Morse can talk and be heard in a whisper all round the globe, but his wires and keys have signalled in vain for even a whisper from the region that is ever so near to us as the grave. Aristotle was the very creator of logic, and more than two thousand years ago gave the world a system of mental and moral philosophy, but he could only say to a dying fellow-man, "I know not whither thou goest."

In contrast with all this, how clear, positive, and radiant are the declarations of Jesus Christ. He speaks, and doubt disappears, light shines upon the soul, and immortality is revealed.

Thomas said unto Him, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way and the truth and the life." He also said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again." To such declarations as these the troubled, weary soul responds in joyful eagerness, "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief."

One of the earliest recollections of my boyhood, and that has had its influence upon my life, is that of the dying shout, which rang, we may say, through the streets of my native city, of the father of the physician who waited upon the infant moments and growing years of my existence. On his death-bed he said: "Be quiet, my son? Be quiet? No! No! If I had the voice of an angel I would rouse the inhabitants of Baltimore to tell them of the joys of redeeming love. Victory! Victory! Victory through the blood of the Lamb!" Oh, thus to die; it is the privilege of our faith, in hope of that spring-time whose days shall lengthen into eternity, in hope of the resurrection and heaven which shall be as surely as with another Sunday the Easter sun is preparing to rise upon a world in fasting and sorrow for its sin.

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Christian unity and Christian faith. A series of discourses delivered in St. George's church, St. Louis, by ministers of various churches. With an introductory essay by John Fulton ... New York, A. D. F. Randolph & company [1883]

201 p. 19½cm.

1. Christian union. 2. Fulton, John, 1834–1907.

31-11233

Library of Congress BX8.A1C35

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